DH
DECCAN HERALD
The Power of Good

Sciver-Brunt hits first-ever WPL ton

Richa's knock in vain as RCB lose to MI by 15 runs

Page 13

Lease not renewed for 18 years, city college in fix

Govt yet to decide on extension; autonomy under threat

RASHMI BELUR
BENGALURU, DHNS

IN LIMBO

- Dept has given conditional 6-month extension in the interest of students
- Decision on renewing lease deferred due to disagreement over lease amount
- The lease amount, based on present value, comes up to Rs 90 crore
- A few ministers felt that the amount was too high

The Maharani Lakshmi Ammanni College for Women (MLACW), among the city's oldest and reputable institutions, is facing the threat of losing its 'autonomous' status as its land lease agreement expired in 2008 and the government is yet to decide on the renewal.

Dr Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University (BCU) has written to the state government not to approve admissions at the college, pointing out that students were onboarded despite expiry of the land lease.

However, the higher education department has given a conditional six-month approval in the interest of students.

"The conditional approval is not retrospective," an official source specified.

Established in 1972 by historian K N V Sastri, MLACW caters to 3,500 students. If the government refuses to renew the lease agreement, MLACW will lose its 'autonomous' tag. "Even for affiliation, the institution will have to show the necessary building infrastructure and half-acre land. Otherwise, the university will recommend shifting students to other institutions," a BCU source said.

In 1978, the government granted one acre of land in Malleswaram to MLACW. The land, which belongs to the school education and literacy department, was leased for 30 years. The annual lease amount was Rs 1,000.

The matter came up before the Cabinet last week. A decision on renewing the lease with retrospective effect was deferred due to disagreement over the lease amount.

"The lease amount, based on the present value, comes up to Rs 90 crore. A few ministers felt that the amount was too high," a senior minister said.

▸ College, Page 5

Tariff cuts likely as EU trade talks end

Deals to be announced following India-EU Summit today

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India and the European Union (EU) are set to eliminate or substantially lower tariffs on a majority of traded goods as the two sides close in on a long-awaited free trade agreement (FTA), which is likely to be announced on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to host European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa at the India-EU Summit.

The trade deal is likely to be the key focus of the 16th edition of the India-EU Summit. Top leadership from both sides have hinted at the conclusion of the deal, for which the negotiation was launched in 2007.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal on Monday said that negotiations have concluded and the deals would be announced following the India-EU Summit. However, final signing of the agreement will take place after legal scrubbing of text, which can take up to 5-6 months, he said.

"A successful India makes the world more stable, prosperous and secure. And, we all benefit," von der Leyen said in a post on X.

Last week, von der Leyen had termed the proposed FTA between India and the EU as the 'mother of all deals'.

PM Modi said the presence of the EU's top leadership at the Republic Day celebrations "underscores the growing strength of the India-EU partnership."

▸ Trade deal, Page 5
Navarro, Vance & Trump stalled deal: Senator, Page 10

$136.6 bn
India-EU goods trade in FY25

$75.9 bn
India's exports to EU

$60.7 bn
India's imports from EU

What India exports to the EU
Refined petroleum products, mobile phones, garments, machinery, gems and jewellery, auto parts, footwear, coffee

What India imports from the EU
High-end machinery, aircraft, scientific instruments, electronics components, rough diamonds, organic chemicals

Tariffs to be reduced
Labour-intensive sectors like textiles, footwear, gems & jewellery may get duty-free access to EU markets

'Successful India makes world stable'

A successful India makes the world more stable, prosperous and secure, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said after witnessing the 77th Republic Day celebrations. Page 8

Canadian PM likely to visit India in March

Canada's PM Mark Carney will likely visit India in the first week of March and sign deals on uranium, energy, minerals and AI, said Dinesh Patnaik, India's High Commissioner to Canada.
Details on Page 8

PAGEANTRY, PROWESS AT R-DAY PARADE

Suryastra, the Universal Rocket Launcher System (left), and BrahMos Mobile Autonomous Launcher at the 77th Republic Day Parade at Kartavya Path in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

Rajeev Gowda arrested in Kerala

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Chikkaballapur police on Monday arrested former Congress leader Rajeev Gowda in Kerala in connection with the threat he made to Shidlaghatta city municipal council commissioner Amrita Gowda.

Chikkaballapur SP Kushal Chouksey confirmed the arrest, but said details would be provided on Tuesday.
Details on Page 4

Techie rams car into wall, kills man clinging onto it

Prashanth M alias Venu

Roshan Hegde

BENGALURU, DHNS: The police have arrested a 37-year-old software engineer for deliberately ramming his car to kill a bodybuilder following a drunken brawl.

The incident occurred in Hebbagodi around 9.30 pm on Sunday.

Prashanth M alias Venu (33), a bodybuilder from Veerasandra, was killed after an argument with Roshan Hegde, a techie from KR Puram, escalated.

The two were drinking on an open ground behind the M5 Ecity Mall, Electronics City, after a cricket match.

A quarrel broke out and quickly turned violent, as both men allegedly attacked each other with beer bottles.

During the scuffle, Hegde suffered a cut on his tongue. Fearing further attacks, he drove off in his Tata Safari car.

However, Prashanth allegedly chased the car and clung to its left door as the car sped along Veerasandra–Kammasandra Road.

Hegde rammed the car into a tree and then into a wall, killing Prashanth. Police received a call reporting an accident. However, a preliminary probe revealed the crash was intentional. The incident was captured on the dash camera.
Another report, Page 3

'Socio-edu survey report by Feb-end'

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes (KSCBC) is expected to submit its report on the social and educational survey to the state government by the end of February.

Once the survey report is ready, it will be translated into Kannada and submitted to the government, said sources.
Details on Page 4

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CBC 03101/13/0005/2526

Fertility clinics lean on new technology for challenging male infertility cases

SpermVD reduces repeat surgical retrievals

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Technology is giving fertility clinics in Bengaluru an edge against male infertility, with SpermVD emerging as a more precise alternative to conventional diagnostic methods.

SpermVD is mainly used for persons battling severe male infertility, non-obstructive azoospermia and extremely low sperm count. The technology stands out as it is designed to preserve very small numbers of sperm, including single sperm cells.

"The technique allows high recovery of sperm after thawing, which is critical when sperm numbers are limited. Stored sperm can be located quickly after warming, reducing laboratory search time," Dr Mohammed

Ashraf C, Scientific Director and Head of Embryology at a private hospital in Bengaluru, told *DH*.

Dr Ashraf said a single testicular biopsy can be divided into multiple frozen portions. "This may help avoid repeat surgical sperm retrievals. Sperm freezing can be done independent of egg collection. This lowers the risk of cycle cancellation. Rapid freezing helps limit structural damage to the sperm."

When conventional sperm freezing methods are not sufficient and reliable, especially in cryptozoospermia and oligozoospermia, where sperm availability is difficult to track and unpredictable, SpermVD can be of help, doctors say.

"In cryptozoospermia, where sperms are hidden and only detectable after centrifugation and washing, this technology allows precious motile sperm to be preserved rather than lost. This reduces the likelihood of being advised donor sperm solely due to difficulty in sperm detection," said Dr Santosh Gupta, Clinical Director and Fertility Specialist at another private hospital.

He added that it is also useful in severe oligozoospermia, where sperm availability is unpredictable.

Dr Apurva Satish Amarnath, Fertility Specialist, believes the technology also has an upper hand because of reduced surgical interventions.

"In view of higher recovery rates of the retrieved sperm, the need for multiple samples is less, surgical retrieval is reduced and thus the physical stress to the person is lower."

SpermVD is more expensive than conventional sperm freezing because it requires specialised equipment, extra consumables, and more time from laboratory staff.

Total charges for vitrification-based sperm freezing may be 20-30% higher than conventional freezing, said Dr Ashraf.

Why SpermVD costs more

- Requires specialised equipment
- Involves additional consumables
- Needs more laboratory staff time
- Overall cost is about 20–30% higher than conventional sperm freezing

BMTC bus hit by train while reversing on railway track

BENGALURU, DHNS: A BMTC bus was damaged after a train rammed into it while it was reversing on a railway track at Sadaramangala near Kadugodi on Monday, officials said.

The conductor sustained injuries, but a major tragedy was averted as there were no passengers on board at the time.

The incident occurred around 9.10 am when the bus from the Sadaramangala depot (51) was heading towards the Kadugodi bus station.

Officials said the driver, while reversing on the railway parallel road, drove onto the track between the Hoodi and Whitefield stations.

Moments later, the passenger train hit the rear portion of the bus, injuring the conductor, Srinivas.

A senior officer from the Cantonment Railway Police said preliminary findings suggest the accident was caused by the negligence of the BMTC driver, Shanmuga, and a case has been registered against him.

The BMTC bus after being struck by the train at Sadaramangala, Kadugodi, on Monday.

WinZO accused of using AI to generate Rs 3,522 cr illegally

ED flags bots, rigged games and fake player profiles

BENGALURU, DHNS

Gaming platform WinZO Pvt Ltd used bots and AI algorithm profiles to cheat users and generated Rs 3,522 crore in proceeds of crime, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has alleged.

The ED detailed the allegations in a complaint before a special court in Bengaluru on January 23.

The agency launched an investigation based on cheating cases in Bengaluru, Rajasthan, New Delhi and Gurugram.

The agency has arraigned the company as the main accused, along with its directors — Paavan Nanda and Saumya Singh Rathore — and wholly-owned subsidiaries, both foreign and Indian entities — Winzo US Inc, USA, Winzo SG Pte Ltd, and ZO Pvt Ltd.

"For providing these RMG (Real Money Games) services, the company charges a percentage of the betting amounts as commission. The company also assured users its gaming platform is free from bots and is transparent and secure," the agency stated.

However, ED investigations revealed that most RMGs were "manipulated".

An analysis of game codebases, developer agreements

and internal communications revealed that the RMGs were embedded with bots, AI, and algorithm profiles until December 2023.

Between May 2024 and August 2025, the company changed its bot methods to simulate historical match-play data of dormant players against real users without their knowledge or consent.

"To suppress these acts, the company referred to bots and simulated players under misleading terms such as EP (Engagement Play), PPP (Past Performance of Player) and Persona," the ED added.

Evidence recovered from seized electronic devices showed that the "manipulative" gaming structure led to severe financial and mental distress, including suicidal tendencies, particularly among users from economically weaker backgrounds.

Lured by fake wins

Investigations revealed users were initially lured with small bonuses and made to win against easy bots, even being allowed to withdraw small winnings, creating "a false sense of trust".

However, once users began playing with higher amounts, winning or hard bots were deployed systematically, resulting in significant financial losses to users, the ED said.

ED investigations revealed that genuine users lost Rs 734 crore to bot profiles (both EP and PPP bot plays).

WinZO also failed to return legitimate user winnings and deposit amounts of Rs 47.66 crore after the Centre banned the RMGs. It generated Rs 3,522 crore in proceeds of crime from 2021-2022 to August 2025.

Evidence found in seized electronic devices further revealed that this "manipulative" gaming structure caused severe financial and mental distress, including suicidal tendencies, to users, especially those from poor financial backgrounds, the ED alleged.

Investigations also revealed that the company laundered the proceeds of crime through shell companies created in the US and Singapore.

24-yr-old woman dies by suicide over dowry

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 24-year-old married woman died by suicide at her home in southern Bengaluru on Sunday, allegedly due to repeated monetary demands from her husband.

Keerthisri's parents alleged she was under severe mental distress due to repeated monetary demands from her husband. Unable to bear the continued harassment, she ended her life by hanging at her home in Yediyur, Banashankari, they said.

Keerthisri

Guruprasad

Keerthisri's family reportedly spent around Rs 30 lakh on her wedding with Guruprasad, a gym trainer, in 2023.

In December 2025, Guruprasad allegedly demanded Rs 10 lakh for house construction, of which Rs 8 lakh was paid. He kept pressuring Keerthisri to arrange the remaining Rs 2 lakh as soon as possible.

Based on a complaint from Keerthisri's parents, the Banashankari police have registered a case of dowry harassment and abetment to suicide against Guruprasad and his parents. Further investigations are underway.

(If you are experiencing thoughts of self-harm and suicide, please reach out to the 14416 TeleMANAS helpline for support.)

12 arrested for brutal murder of rowdy; police to book all under KCOCA

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Bengaluru police have arrested 12 men in connection with the brutal murder of history-sheeter Syed Shabbir on Mangammanapalya Main Road in south Bengaluru on January 12.

The 30-year-old was hacked to death while returning from Victoria Hospital in an autorickshaw.

Police said the assailants intercepted the vehicle around 10.30 pm, blinded Shabbir and his cousin by throwing "third-degree powder" — a potent chilli-based irritant — and attacked him with machetes and other deadly weapons.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the murder was a premeditated act of retaliation.

Shabbir, the son of a retired KSRP officer, allegedly exercised control over local settlements and extortion rackets. Rivals and local petty criminals, police said, had grown resentful of being threatened and assaulted for operating in his territory. They had reportedly planned to kill him twice earlier, but failed due to his cautious movements.

"The gang knew Shabbir was visiting a relative at the hospital and lay in wait. They used chilli powder to disable him before launching the attack," said an officer close to the investigation.

The arrested accused have been identified as Noorullah alias Sunny, 33, Nadeem alias Naddu, 34, Salman Khan alias Paul, 27, Mohammad Ali, 29, Syed Ismail, 30, Mohammad Siddique, 30, Syed Khalim, 32, Umrez alias UK, 26, Imran alias Kalu, 33, Nawaz Sharif alias One Ten, 28, Salman Khan alias Aashique, 27, and Syed Mubarak alias Mubbu, 35.

After the murder, the suspects fled to Maharashtra, Kerala, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Acting on intelligence, a special team from the Parappana Agrahara police, under the guidance of DCP (Electronics City) Narayana M, tracked and arrested the accused. Police have seized the weapons used in the crime and the vehicles used for the escape.

The Bandepalya police have registered a case under Sections 103(1) (murder) and 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), along with provisions of the Arms Act.

Police said they plan to invoke the Karnataka Control of Organised Crime Act (KCOCA) against all the accused, which allows for detention without bail for up to one year.

"Following directives from Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh, we are preparing to register a case under KCOCA against all the suspects," the DCP said.

Ejipura flyover project: GBA seeks St John's land for portal piers

BENGALURU, DHNS: Top officials of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) and Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) on Monday met the management of St John's National Academy of Health Sciences over acquiring a part of their land to build five portal piers of the Ejipura flyover.

The portal piers will be constructed along the footpath adjoining the compound wall of the hospital.

Officials said the hospital management had agreed to permit the use of the required land.

GBA Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao directed engineers to mark the area and commence work immediately.

On the land needed for constructing the ramp on the hospital premises, the chief commissioner instructed officials to expedite the process of issuing Transferrable Development Right (TDR) certificates and take possession of the land at the earliest.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Karthik Reddy was present on the occasion.

Raghavendra Prasad, chief engineer in charge of the project, said construction of the 2.38-km flyover on Ejipura Main Road was progressing rapidly. "A total of 762 segments are required for the flyover. We have readied 645 segments and erected 490," he said.

'Poor People's Republic Day' event: Displaced Fakir Colony residents speak out

BENGALURU, DHNS: The 'Poor People's Republic Day' was celebrated at Fakir Colony in northern Bengaluru on Monday.

The locality in Kogilu Layout shot to prominence earlier this month after authorities demolished scores of homes, claiming they were built on encroached land.

The event was organised by Dudiya Janara Vedike, AITUC, CITU, Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), Gamana Mahila Samooha, Janavadi Mahila Sanghatane, Karnataka Janashakti, Movement for Gender and Sexual Pluralism (MGSP), National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), Students' Federation of India (SFI), Slum Janara Sanghatane, Slum Mahila Sanghatane, Karnataka State Garments and Textile Workers' Union, Slum Jagattu, and other progressive organisations and activists.

Khadar B, a resident of Fakir Colony, and Jyothi from NFIW hoisted the national flag. The national anthem was sung, and everyone present at the programme read the Preamble to the Constitution. The programme included the singing of five patriotic songs and speeches.

"The government celebrates Republic Day at the Vidhana Soudha, but does not allow the poor inside. What we are celebrating here is the Poor People's Republic Day. This is our right. We have only one demand — housing must be provided to us," Jyothi said.

Hanumantharao Havaldar of CITU said: "A government that gives one acre of land to Adani for one rupee is not even giving a small piece of land to us who were born and brought up here."

The programme concluded with a message raising awareness about people's rights, constitutional values and the right to housing.

Cybercrime police probe fake KSIC Insta pages

BENGALURU, DHNS: Unknown miscreants impersonated the Karnataka Silk Industries Corporation (KSIC), prompting the city police to register a case.

Central Cybercrime Police registered an FIR on January 20 based on a complaint by Doddappa Sutagatti, a marketing assistant with KSIC. In his complaint, Sutagatti said that over the past six months, the accused created fake Instagram accounts impersonating KSIC and offered sarees purchased from KSIC outlets for sale online without authorisation. He said the activity could harm the brand.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Pavagada Prakasrao's 'Jaimini Bharata' lecture series: Poet Lakshmishara, organised by Dr Pavagad Prakasaraya Amrutha Mahotsava Committee; Sri Ram Mandir, NR Colony; 5.45 pm.

CULTURAL

'Rajyasatyavratha-Shaniprabhava' play performance: Inauguration by Jyothilingappa MS, B Muniraju; Dhanussu Cultural Arts Association; Srinivasa Samudra Bhavan, Nelamangala; from 3 pm.

'Rangakarmi Telecom Dattatreya-Nenapu' Ranga Sangeetha: Inauguration by KV Nagarajamurthy, CK Gundanna, organied by Rangachandira; Nayana Auditorium, Kannada Bhavan, JC Road; 4.30 pm.

Drama festival: 'Mahatmaara Baravigagi' play, directed by NV Srikanth, organised by Yaksha Rangayana; Ravindra Kalakshetra, JC Road; 6.30 pm.

Singing of Dasara Padala: Anant Kulkarni and team, organized by and venue Raghavendra Swamy Math, 1st Main Road, RK Layout, Padmanabhanagar; 6.30 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST
Mist

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	26.0°C
Minimum	18.0°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	69%
Sunset (Jan 27)	6:18 pm
Sunrise (Jan 28)	6:46 am
Moonrise	11:54 am
Moonset	12:00 am

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice B-SG-P-SBC-TD-ASK-JRU-HRR Dated : 16-01-2026

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following work:

Item of work	Approx. Value
South Western Railway -Mysuru Division- Throughput Enhancement and Safety work by Provision of reliable track detection with Multisection Digital Axle Counters (MSDAC) in parallel with DC track circuit for improvement of reliability of signalling assets at major stations and junctions stations along with alteration to Existing Electronic Interlocking at Arsikere (ASK), Kadur (DRU), Birur (RRB), Chikjajur (JRU), Amaravathi Colony (AVC) & Harihar (HRR) over Mysuru Division in Sampige Road-Haveri Section.	Rs. 28,76,23,630.82

Last date for submission of bids : Upto 15:00 Hrs. on 11-02-2026

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Deputy Chief Signal & Telecommunication Engineer / Project / Bengaluru

PUB/840/AAF/PRB/SWR/2025-26

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South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRAILWAYHQ | sw_railways

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice No. E-GSU-ELE-2025-26-OT-6A Dated : 20-01-2026

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following work:

Name of work	Approx. Value
OHE Modification Works in Connection with The Proposed Shifting of Points And Crossings at Bengaluru Cantonment Yard	Rs. 1,55,30,559.48

Last date for submission of bids: Upto 11:00 Hrs. on 11-02-2026

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Keep visiting the website for any corrigendum till closing date

Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer, Gati Shakti Unit / Bengaluru

PUB/845/AAF/PRB/SWR/2025-26

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South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRAILWAYHQ | sw_railways

Woman uses GPS to outsmart thief

BENGALURU, DHNS: A GPS tracker attached to a set of keys helped police nab a man who stole a bag from an unlocked car in Sadashiva Nagar within hours of the theft.

The incident occurred around 10.30 am on January 16 near the Third Wave Cafe on 13th Main Road. Police said the 39-year-old complainant had forgotten to lock her car.

The accused, Prakash, allegedly fled with a bag containing a laptop, charger, ID card, wallet and house keys, which had a GPS device attached. The tracker led the police to Rajajinagar, where the suspect was found with the bag and the stolen items were recovered intact.

LOCAL SOLUTION, NATIONAL IMPACT

From city walks to Mann ki Baat: Waste disposal idea that wowed the PM

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed Bengaluru's efforts to address sofa and mattress waste.

His latest 'Mann ki Baat' address featured waste management efforts by Arun Pai, founder of Bangalore Walks.

On December 1, Pai posted a reel on social media showing how to dismantle and dispose of sofas and mattresses, in collaboration with Bellandur ward authorities.

In the video, he showed how two people can demolish a large sofa within 15 minutes, sending foam and coir to waste-to-energy, metal to scrap and wood as firewood.

The inspiration for the video arose from Pai's several city walks.

"During my city walks, one of the main problems we saw was the number of sofas, mattresses, commodes and ceramics discarded by the roadside and on footpaths. People do not know how to get rid of them. GBA Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao also agreed this was a major problem," Pai told *DH*.

A sofa dismantled as part of the clean-up drive, seen in an Insta video.

He is also the Coordinator of Walkaluru, a joint initiative with the GBA.

The video aimed to encourage other wards to take up similar initiatives.

"People in Bengaluru often throw away sofas in good shape that can be refurbished. As large sofas are not easy to move, they dispose of them. You will find such sofas and mattresses in many open areas," he added.

Pai has also created tutorials on disposing of commodes and ceramics.

"The BSWML has said this method would be adopted across waste management centres in the city. We can also look at monthly drives to collect such items in bulk," he said.

1,000 MT bulky waste cleared

The Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML) collected 1,000 megatonnes of bulky waste — sofas, mattresses, cots, commodes and similar items — from Bengaluru's streets between October and December 2025, CEO Karee Gowda said.

"We did not collect from homes, but focused on waste already thrown out. A ground check now shows such waste has drastically reduced. We dismantled bulky waste and sent it to the waste-to-energy plant," he told *DH*.

The BSWML is developing an app to collect such waste directly from households. Initially set to launch in October, it was delayed by three months and will likely launch in the coming week, Gowda added.

Guv hails state's 'social democracy' model, outlines $20 bn quantum vision

Delivers full address, unlike truncated speech to legislature

BENGALURU, DHNS

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Monday lauded Karnataka's emergence as a pioneer in "social democracy," emphasising that the state's welfare-driven governance was effectively bridging the gap between political equality and economic empowerment.

He was addressing the state at the 77th Republic Day celebrations at the Field Marshal Manekshaw parade ground here.

The governor delivered his full address, in contrast to his brief address to the joint session of the legislature a few days ago, reading only the first and last paragraphs.

Gehlot highlighted the administration's commitment to Dr B R Ambedkar's vision.

"Liberty without equality will permit the domination of the many by the few," Gehlot said, highlighting that the state was spending Rs 1.12 lakh crore annually on public welfare.

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot addresses the gathering during the Republic Day celebrations at Field Marshal Manekshaw parade ground in Bengaluru on Monday.
DH PHOTO/B K JANARDHAN

Women's empowerment

A significant portion of the address was dedicated to the impact of the five 'guarantee' schemes. Gehlot said over Rs 1.13 lakh crore had been disbursed so far, significantly boosting the purchasing power of families.

He specifically highlighted gender sensitive reforms, including the recently implemented 12 days of annual paid menstrual leave for women workers and the formation of 'Akka' task force.

"Bengaluru now ranks first in the country for women's safety," the Governor said, citing recent surveys.

Quantum capital

While maintaining its lead in IT-BT, Karnataka is now pivoting towards deep-tech.

The governor released the 'Karnataka Quantum Roadmap,' which envisions building a $20-billion quantum economy by 2035. To decentralise this growth, the government has introduced the local economy accelerator programme (LEAP) with a Rs 1,000-crore fund, aimed at creating 5 lakh jobs outside Bengaluru over the next five years.

Justice & infra

Highlighting the state's administrative efficiency, Gehlot pointed to the India Justice Report 2025, where Karnataka secured the top rank in justice delivery. In the capital, infrastructure remains a priority with projects worth Rs 1.5 lakh crore underway, including the systematic expansion of Namma Metro and the Bengaluru Business Corridor.

The governor also touched upon the state's pro-farmer stance, noting that Rs 2,250 crore was allocated for crop damage compensation following the 2025 rains.

He concluded by urging citizens to protect the federal structure of the Constitution, stating, "The dream was to build a strong India through strong states".

Techie drove for 1 km as victim clung to car door: Police

MANJUNATH SHETTAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

The car of the accused Roshan Hegde, after it rammed into a compound wall.

Roshan Hegde, a 37-year-old techie arrested for the murder of 33-year-old bodybuilder Prashant M alias Venu, drove his car for nearly a kilometre with the victim clinging to its side door, eventually ramming him into a compound wall, police say.

The genesis of the fatal drunken brawl lay in a cricket tournament at Kammasandra, where Prashanth's team lost the match on Saturday, a senior police officer said, citing preliminary investigations.

Around 7.30 pm on Sunday, Prashanth left home after receiving a phone call and later went to the Kammasandra ground, where he and Roshan got into an argument again.

As the quarrel escalated, Roshan drove his car at up to 50 kmph, while Prashanth was attempting to stop the vehicle from outside, and clung onto the left-side window before the fatal crash.

CCTV footage of his hanging was caught in a roadside commercial building and police have recovered it as part of the investigation.

The body was later shifted to St John's Hospital for post-mortem. The family conducted his last rituals on Monday.

Roshan had bought the car two years ago. He worked at a tech company near his house in KR Puram.

Cricket was his life, he could never accept defeat: Victim's mom

Prashant, the victim, firmly believed that "accepting defeat is the same as accepting death", his mother Anusuya Manjunath said.

According to her, she started calling him Venu after an astrologer suggested that the name 'Prashanth' did not suit his horoscope. She described him as a quiet and sensitive person who never caused problems for the family.

"He always shared our burdens and stood by us in every situation. Yesterday, he came home and broke down in front of me, crying that he had lost the weekend cricket tournament. Cricket meant everything to him. He could never accept defeat and always wanted to win. However, Venu never mentioned any quarrel or altercation following the tournament," she told DH.

Prashanth managed a parking space on leased land and occasionally helped his mother run her petty shop.

"After my husband passed away two years ago, he was my biggest support. His death is an irreparable loss to me," Anusuya said.

Prashanth, who held a diploma in engineering, was a fitness enthusiast who regularly went to the gym and was into bodybuilding.

"His friends loved him a lot. He was even planning to participate in a bodybuilding competition in the coming event," she added.

CULTURE & THE CONSTITUTION: Parade ground draped in patriotism as B'luru elebrates 77th R-Day

Made to remove black clothing, many end up shivering in morning chill

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Field Marshal Manekshaw parade ground transformed into a kaleidoscope of saffron, white and green as Bengaluru celebrated the 77th Republic Day with traditional fervour.

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot unfurled the Tricolour, followed by rendition of the national anthem.

Accompanying him were Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM D K Shivakumar.

While the crowd-favourite 'Tornado' bike stunts were notably absent this year due to scheduling constraints, the 37 contingents comprising over 1,100 personnel delivered a display of discipline.

A unique highlight was the inclusion of the Tamil Nadu police platoon, symbolising inter-state camaraderie, and the dog squad.

The march-past featured the Army, Air Force and an all-women police unit, followed by a vibrant cultural showcase, where 1,400 schoolchildren danced to patriotic songs.

The parade ground turned into a cultural extravaganza as 650 children from BCCW Composite College, Herohalli, presented a vibrant tribute to harvest festival 'Makara Sankranti'.

The performance titled 'The Joy of Makara Sankranti' depicted the transition of the sun into capricorn, symbolising the shift from darkness to light. Students mimed the sharing of Ellu-Bella (sesame and jaggery), a reminder of Karnataka's culture of harmony.

Another performance by 750 students from government high school, Bagalagunte, titled 'Unification of India and New India', took the audience on a historical journey.

The performance vividly portrayed the efforts of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and V P Menon in unifying the 500 princely states, including a dramatic representation of 'Operation Polo' that brought Hyderabad into the Indian fold.

Transitioning to the present, the children showcased the evolution of the Constitution and the state government's 'five guarantee schemes,' framing them as modern tools for equality and social justice.

Despite the stringent security and early morning traffic diversions, the spirit among the over 2,000 spectators remained high.

Sharp-eyed spectators pointed out that the main official welcome board still bore the BBMP acronym instead of the newly formed GBA.

"I've been coming here since I was a boy," said Anantha Krishna, a retired bank official.

Students present a Yakshagana dance at the celebrations.

The police band marches past at the parade.

"The bike stunts were missed, but seeing the discipline of the cadets during march past was the real highlight for me today".

Suhasini M, a college student, said, "It's inspiring to see the patriotism in kids, many of whom have arrived here as early as 6 in the morning chill, hats off to their energy and perfomance".

Security was at tight, crossing the line into inconvenience, many said.

A strict ban on black clothing, meant to prevent black-flag protests, left many shivering in the morning chill.

Shyla, an elderly attendee, was forced to remove her black sweater at the gate.

"I wore a black sweater, and they made me take it off. In this cold weather, it doesn't make sense to leave," she lamented.

Other spectators complained about the lack of a cloakroom, forcing those with prohibited items to either discard them or head back home.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar and Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot at the event. DH PHOTO/RANJU P

Flower show ends with 8 1L visitors, Rs 2.46 cr revenue

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Republic Day flower show at Lalbagh Botanical Garden concluded on Monday, with the 13-day event drawing a total of 8.10 lakh visitors and generating Rs 2.46 crore in entry fees.

The life and works of Kannada writer K P Poornachandra Tejasvi were showcased at the Glass House through vibrant floral arrangements called 'Tejasvi Vismaya'.

A massive hill-like structure rising amid colourful flowers, Tejasvi's statue atop it, a cascading artificial waterfall, and a floral recreation of the house from 'Niruttara' captivated visitors. Sculptures based on attractive and meaningful caricatures depicting Tejasvi's interests—music, painting, hunting, agriculture, bird photography, activism, literature, machines and computers—were displayed in a world of flowers. Lakhs of people from across the country and abroad visited the exhibition.

"On the final day (Monday), 1,94,165 people visited the flower show, generating Rs 65.01 lakh in entry fees. Over 13 days, 8,10,973 visitors attended the exhibition. Including entry fees, shop rentals and exhibition charges, a total revenue of Rs 2.74 crore was collected," said M Jagadeesh, Additional Director of the Horticulture Department.

Guarantees align with Constitutional values: CM

BENGALURU, DHNS: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said that the state government's five guarantee schemes were firmly aligned with the Constitution.

In a statement on the occasion of the 77th Republic Day, Siddaramaiah said the Constitution guided every policy decision of his government. Referring to Article 39, the CM said the State had a constitutional obligation to ensure the right to livelihood and a dignified life for every citizen. Citing Article 15(3), he said the Constitution empowered governments to make special provisions for women and children, providing the basis for schemes such as Gruha Lakshmi and Shakti.

"Our guarantee schemes are not charity. They are our constitutional responsibility," said Siddaramaiah, arguing that poverty was "not a crime, but the result of unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities." Both CM and his deputy DK Shivakumar cautioned against efforts to weaken constitutional institutions.

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Don't approve hate speech Bill, VHP urges governor

BENGALURU, DHNS: A delegation of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leaders on Monday called on Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot appealing him to withhold assent to the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2025.

In the letter submitted to the Governor, VHP Karnataka Dakshin dubbed the legislation 'unconstitutional', besides pointing to legal inconsistencies in the same. The legislation violates various articles of the Constitution, the letter contended.

In the letter, the VHP said that the bill did not clearly delineate what constituted 'hate speech'. The ambiguity surrounding the definition of the term in the bill could lead to its probable misuse by various agencies, said the letter. "It violates the very principles of Freedom of Speech and Expression," stated the letter, adding that the enactment of the bill could potentially criminalise 'legitimate dissent, criticism and political speech'.

Lakkundi boy, family feted for handing over treasure to govt

GADAG, DHNS: The district administration, on Monday, felicitated Prajwal Ritti, a boy from the historic town of Lakkundi, his mother Kasturavva and grandmother Girijamma for their gesture of handing over gold treasure unearthed while digging ground on their plot to build a house. A compensation of Rs 5 lakh was also given to them.

Addressing the gathering at the event, district incharge Minister H K Patil said, "A title deed for a 30x40 site was given to the family as per a resolution in the special gram sabha of the Lakkundi gram panchayat. An order copy of the Rs lakh grant under the Gadag MLA's discretionary funds was also given, under the CM's infrastructure development scheme 2025-26".

Kasturavva has been given a job as an assistant cook on contract basis at the medical and engineering students' hostel in Gadag, the minister said.

BJP questions Congress protest during joint session

Suresh Kumar raises concerns over propriety, legality

BENGALURU, DHNS

The ruling Congress that pushed for a special session (Jan 22 to 31) of the Karnataka Legislature to debate the "implications" of the newly passed central legislation – VB-G RAM G Act that replaces the UPA-era MGNREGA (rural employment guarantee scheme) is in the dock for organising a protest rally from Freedom Park to Lok Bhavan (Raj Bhavan) on Tuesday at 11 am, even as the legislature is in session.

Senior BJP leader and former minister Suresh Kumar on Monday questioned the ruling party's decision to organise a protest during the ongoing session, raising concerns over propriety, legality and constitutional responsibility.

"The Assembly is scheduled to meet at 10 am on Tuesday (January 27), beginning with Question Hour, followed by a discussion on the controversy related to the Governor's Address. However, the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) has announced that a mass protest will be held at 11 am at Freedom Park, followed by a 'Raj Bhavan Chalo' programme," said Kumar in a social media post.

Suresh Kumar

Amid public criticism of the government for holding fewer Legislature sessions (29 days in 2024 and 34 days in 2025) than the mandated 60 days a year, the exorbitant cost (10-day winter session at Belagavi cost Rs 27 crore) and accusation of wasting precious hours of House proceedings due to protests and walkouts, the Congress party has organised the 'Raj Bhavan Chalo' rally, which will be attended by by AICC general secretaries K C Venugopal and Randeep Singh Surjewala, MLAs, MLCs, cabinet ministers, party leaders and workers.

The BJP leader also pointed out that as per High Court directions, processions, road marches and gheraos in Bengaluru have been restricted, and questioned whether allowing the ruling party to go ahead with such a programme would amount to selective application of the law.

"If permission is granted to the ruling party for a gherao or march, will similar permission be extended to other political parties as well?" he asked.

Protest by Opposition today

Incidentally, the opposition BJP and JD(S) are staging a protest near the Mahatma Gandhi statue inside the Vidhana Soudha complex at 10.30 am, to "condemn" the "goonda" behaviour of the Congress legislators who allegedly showed disrespect to the Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Thursday after the latter walked out without reading the full speech prepared by the state government.

The Assembly speaker U T Khader had reserved the ruling in the matter till Tuesday. The BJP is also staging a protest demanding the resignation of Excise minister R B Thimmapur over the alleged liquor licence bribery scam.

Socio-edu survey report to be submitted by February-end

Data analysis going on, likely to be submitted to govt after translation

SUJAY B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes (KSCBC) is expected to submit its report on the social and educational survey to the state government by February-end.

KSCBC Chairman Madhusudan R Naik told *DH* that the report may be submitted within a month. According to the commission sources, the data is being analysed, and might take another 10-15 days. Once the report is ready, it will be translated into Kannada and then submitted to the government, sources added.

Initially, the commission had been asked to submit the report by December-end.

Speaking to *DH*, Backward Classes Welfare Department Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi said: "Data from across the state needs to be analysed and it will take some time. There's no deadline as such but the chief minister has asked them to give it soon."

The survey is politically contentious. While it has historically been criticised by the dominant Lingayat and Vokkaliga communities, minorities, Dalits and backward classes have supported it.

Amid the power tussle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar, it is expected that Siddaramaiah — a vocal proponent of the survey — may insist that the report is taken forward during his tenure itself (in the event of a possible change of chief minister).

The Karnataka High Court had asked the commission not to share the data with anyone, including the government. However, sources clarified that this only applied to the process of preparing the report. Once the report is prepared, there is no bar on the commission from submitting it to the government, a source added.

The physical leg of the social and educational survey was conducted between September 22 and October 31. The online self-enumeration was extended till November-end.

After the physical leg ended, the KSCBC had declared that 6.13 crore out of 6.85 crore people (89.48%) had been enumerated. However, KSCBC Member Secretary K A Dayananda told *DH* that this figure included households that had refused to disclose information.

"After filtering, we found that 5.86 crore persons participated in the survey (the population estimate considered by the commission was 6.85 crore) and that data is being analysed. The remaining 1 crore or so include persons who did not disclose information, houses which were locked and so on."

Secondary data

Dayananda explained that the commission had now collected secondary data related to caste from educational institutions and government offices.

"This time, we have collected caste-wise data from the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) about admission in medical, engineering, ayurvedic, degree and PU colleges. Similarly, caste-wise data has also been collected from all government departments, boards and corporations," he added.

Secondary data is deemed crucial as it provides a clearer picture of the education levels of each community and the extent of reservation obtained by different communities in government jobs.

In 2015, the H Kantharaj-led commission had conducted a social and educational survey. Based on this, the K Jayaprakash Hegde-led commission prepared a report. Last June, Siddaramaiah decided to conduct another survey, as the previous survey was 10 years old, and the KSCBC Act, 1995, mandates the revision of the backward class list once every 10 years.

Governor's address row: CM, DCM differ in views

Such matters normal, says Shivakumar

BENGALURU, DHNS

The row over the governor's joint address in Karnataka has triggered a political debate on what a governor can or cannot do. But the controversy has once again exposed that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy, D K Shivakumar, are not on the same page.

Shivakumar

Siddaramaiah, like many of his cabinet members, condemned Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot for not reading out the entire speech prepared by the state government and "walking out" of the House before the national anthem was played, alleging it was an "insult" to the Constitution.

Shivakumar, who is back from Davos after attending the World Economic Forum, opined that such things were "normal" in political life and said the governor could have read the speech and "omitted" only the portions that he was not in agreement with.

"I do not know what has happened. In a political system, all these issues will be there. The governor could have just read the speech and participated in the national anthem. If he was not interested in speaking about (criticism of VB G RAM G Act), he could just leave that out. There were a lot of options (for governor), and many precedents are there too. It was his duty to protect the national anthem. It is not only in Karnataka, but such incidents have also happened in other places, too," Shivakumar said.

Last Thursday, Gehlot read only three lines from the government-approved address and walked out of the joint session of the state legislature, triggering protests by ruling Congress legislators.

Siddaramaiah said the governor had breached constitutional norms and undermined legislative authority by refusing to deliver the full address.

THE CLASSIC CLASP

Students perform Mallakambh during the Republic Day celebrationas organised by the district administration at the Mahatma Gandhi district stadium in Raichur on Monday. DH PHOTO

10.8k teachers to be recruited ahead of next academic year: Madhu Bangarappa

SHIVAMOGGA, DHNS: Minister for School Education and Literacy Madhu Bangarappa on Monday said that the state government was in the process of recruiting 10,800 teachers for government and government-aided schools ahead of the next academic year.

The minister, who hoisted the Tricolour at the Republic Day programme organised by the Shivamogga district administration, said that computer laboratories were being set up, and smart classes being rolled out at 5,000 state-run schools as part of the Karnataka government's push for computerised learning. "We have earmarked a sum of Rs 160 crore towards these initiatives," said Madhu, who is also the Shivamogga district in-charge minister.

Besides recruiting 14,499 full-time teachers, the government had, in a first, hired 51,000 guest teachers to tide over the shortage at government schools, said Madhu.

The Gudavi Bird Sanctuary in Soraba taluk in Shivamogga would be developed and transformed into a tourist hub under the 'One District, One Destination' scheme, said the minister. "The government has also given its nod for the formation of Sri Chandragutti Renukambadevi Development Authority, and an action plan aimed at transforming the pilgrimage centre is being drafted," said Madhu.

Threat to Shidlaghatta official: Cong leader held in Kerala

CHIKKABALLAPUR, DHNS: The Chikkaballapur police, on Monday, arrested former Congress leader Rajeev Gowda in Kerala, in connection with the case of threat to Shidlaghatta city municipal council commissioner Amrita Gowda.

Chikkaballapur district superintendent of police Kushal Chouksey confirmed the arrest, but said details would be provided on Tuesday.

"Rajeev Gowda parked his car in Mangaluru and left for Kerala on January 22. He was arrested while he was leaving Kerala for Goa. He will be produced before the Shidlaghatta court," police sources said.

Three teams had been formed to trace Gowda. A team comprising of CEN station inspector Suryaprakash and Shidlaghatta circle inspector Anand Kumar arrested the former Congress leader.

He had reportedly threatened the commissioner on phone for removing flexes erected in the town, of the movie 'Cult', starring Zaid Khan, son of Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan.

Audios of the phone conversation had gone viral on social media. Amrita Gowda and Shidlaghatta JD(S) legislator B N Ravikumar.

The Congress had expelled Rajeev Gowda as the incident snowballed into a major controversy.

State didn't take back Rs 10 crore given for TB dam gate work: Minister

KOPPAL, DHNS

District In-charge Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi clarified on Monday that the government had not taken back Rs 10 crore released for the work to instal new crest gates for the Tungabhadra reservoir.

Tangadagi, who is also the chairman of the irrigation consultative committee, was addressing a press conference here.

Shivaraj Tangadagi

He was reacting to dam construction expert Kannayya Naidu's recent statement that the Karnataka government had taken back Rs 10 crore through book adjustment.

"Let those who claimed that Karnataka had taken back the money provide documents to prove the charge. The Tungabhadra Board gets money paid by the Tungabhadra riparian states as their share, from the Centre. Payments are made using that money every year via book adjustment. Karnataka has released an amount of Rs 10 crore to the Board," the minister said.

It's possible that Kannayya Naidu has no proper information in this regard, Tangadagi said.

The minister asserted that the work on replacing all 33 crest gates of the Tungabhadra dam would be completed within the stipulated time, promising that farmers downstream would face no problems with regard to release of water for irrigation.

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IN THE COUR OF THE HON'BLE 1ST ADDL. CIVIL JUDGE AT BHADRAVATHI.
OS No.439/2024

Plaintiff: Sri Rafiq Khan S/o Buden Sab, Aged about 64 years, Agriculturist. R/o 1st Main, 3rd cross, Indira Nagara Extension, Bhadravathi, Shivamogga Dist.

V/s

Defendants: Smt.Netravathi and others. (2) Smt. Jyothi D/o Ganesh Rao, Aged about 51 years. (3) Smt. Rekha Hittinamut D/o Ganesh Rao, Aged about 49 years. (4) Sri.Kiran Kumar @ Kiran G. Rao S/o Ganesh Rao, Aged about 46 years, All are Agriculturist. R/o #1916, 36th Main Road, D Group Layout, Sunkadakatte, Bangalore-560091.

NOTICE TO THE DEFENDANT No.2 to 4 UNDER ORDER V RULE 20(1-A) OF C.P.C.
NOTICE

Whereas the plaintiff above named as filed OS suit under order VII Rule 1 R/w section 26 of CPC for the relief of specific performance of agreement Where the plaintiff sought service of notice to the defendant No.2 to 4 vide order dated: 14.01.2026 Passed by this Hon'ble Court. Now therefore this notice is hereby given to you calling upon you to appear before this Hon'ble Court in person or by pleader on 02.03.2026 at 11:00 a.m. failing which the matter will be heard and will be disposed of ex-parte against all of you.

Given under my hand and seal of the Court on 22nd of January 2026.

By the order of this court,
Sd/- Shirastedar, HON'BLE
1st Addl. Civil Judje at
BHADRAVATHI.
Advocate for plaintiff:
Sri M. Anantharamu
Place: Bhadravathi
Date: 22.01.2026

Max temperature dips; light rain in parts of Bengaluru

BENGALURU, DHNS: The maximum temperature in Bengaluru fell by up to 4.8°C while the minimum remained several degrees above normal on Monday evening, as many parts of the city received light rains.

The Bengaluru city observatory recorded a maximum temperature of 24.2°C, 4.8°C below normal. The minimum was 18.5°C, 2.3°C above normal. At HAL airport, the maximum temperature at 5.30 pm on Monday was 24.8°C, a drop of 3.7°C, while the minimum was 18°C, an increase of 3°C.

Kempegowda International Airport recorded a maximum temperature of 25.8°C, down 2.5°C from the normal. The minimum was 18.2°C, up 2.6°C.

Rajavel Manickam, Scientist 'E' at the Meteorological Centre, noted that while dry weather prevails across most of the state, specific pockets are seeing localised activity. "A north-south feeble trough currently runs over the southeast Arabian Sea off the Kerala coast," he stated, contributing to isolated rainfall in the southern parts of Karnataka.

Bengalureans can expect a continuation of the cooling trend, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasting generally cloudy skies and early morning mist for the next 48 hours.

Maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to hover around 25 and 18 degrees celsius respectively.

From Tuesday onwards, dry weather is predicted to prevail across all districts of Karnataka for the remainder of the week.

2 tourists dead after boat capsizes near Malpe coast

GOKARNA (UTTARA KANNADA DISTRICT), DHNS

In a tragic incident, two tourists hailing from Chamarajanagar and working in a call centre in Mysuru lost their lives and two others were critically injured after the boat in which they were travelling capsized near the Malpe coast on Monday.

The deceased are Shankarappa (27) from Harave village and Sindhu (25) from Mooguru village in Chamarajanagar district. Among the injured, Deesha (26) is said to be in a very critical condition, while Dharmaraja (26) is stated to be stable. Malpe police have visited the spot. Further inquiry is underway to ascertain whether safety norms were violated and to fix responsibility.

According to preliminary information, the boat, with a capacity of 15–20 people, was carrying 14 passengers. It departed from the Malpe Delta Beach point but capsized around 12 noon near the Hangarkatte shipbuilding area, close to the confluence of the river and the sea. The incident occurred within the border limits of the Malpe–Kota police station jurisdiction.

The boat was owned by a private operator identified as Waveriders.

While one of the survivors claimed that life jackets were provided to all passengers, it learnt that not everyone was wearing them at the time of the mishap. This claim is yet to be verified, the police said.

When the boat capsized, all 14 passengers were rescued and shifted to the shore with the help of other boats in the vicinity. However, four among them were in a "critical condition" and were rushed to private hospitals for treatment. Later, two of them succumbed to the injuries.

Udupi MLA Yashpal Suvarna blamed the negligence of tourism department for the boat tragedy and the death of tourists. He said that despite repeated complaints from the public about tourist boats operating in violation of rules and without proper licences, the Tourism Department failed to take any action. The MLA urged the authorities to take safety measures to ensure that such incidents do not recur in the future.

Medical student drowns

In a tragic incident, a 22-year-old medical student lost her life while playing in the Main Beach in Gokarna on Sunday evening.

Kalyani Ajeya Pillai (22), hailing from Kottapuram in Kollam district of Kerala, a student of Koppal Institute of Medical Sciences, had come to Gokarna with her collegemates. She waded into the waters of the sea for a swim but it ended in disaster. Thankfully, Mohammed Yusuf Ali (23) of Yadgir, was saved from drowning, Gokarna police said.

Panel to be formed fight for river-linking project

HAVERI, DHNS: Leaders cutting across party lines, seers, farmers and activists gathered here on Monday to plan a campaign to press for the implementation of the Bedti-Varada river linking project. One of the key decisions taken at the meeting entails formation of a committee, members of which will lend voice to the movement, led by seers and political leaders.

It was decided to petition the chief minister, deputy CM and union minister for water resources, demanding speedy implementation of the project. Haveri-Gadag MP Basavaraj Bommai said the project was vital to meet drinking water needs of Haveri district.

Fresh violence hits Manipur as Kuki homes set on fire

Naga rebels claim responsibility; CoTU warns of highway blockade

SUMIR KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI, DHNS

Tension gripped parts of Manipur's Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi district on Monday after several houses were set on fire allegedly by an armed group belonging to the Naga community.

This led the Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU), a forum of Kuki organisations in Kangpokpi, to issue a warning about imposing a "complete shutdown" on a highway if those involved in the arson are not nabbed within 24-hours.

According to police, several houses and farmhouses were set on fire at K Songlung village in the Kuki-dominated district.

Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF), a Naga armed group, reportedly claimed responsibility for the incident while claiming that the houses were used for poppy cultivation-related works. The ZUF is active in parts of Kangpokpi and in neighbouring Naga-dominated Tamenglong and Noney districts.

In a statement, the CoTU said it would impose a total shutdown of National Highway-2 (Imphal–Dimapur) from midnight of January 27 till midnight of January 28, if its demand was not met.

The committee alleged that villages on the periphery of Kangpokpi district were being treated as "soft targets" by ZUF factions and said it would not be held responsible for any consequences arising from the situation.

Security forces rushed to the village in order to prevent a possible clash between the Kuki and the Naga groups. Manipur has remained tense for more than two-and-a-half years due to the conflict involving the Meitei and the Kuki communities. The security agencies fear that a Naga-Kuki conflict could further aggravate the situation.

Kuki groups ask Centre to revoke CRPF officer's gallantry medal

GUWAHATI, DHNS: Kuki organisations in conflict-hit Manipur on Monday protested the Centre's decision to bestow a gallantry medal on a CRPF officer who had led an operation in November 2024, during which at least 10 "armed persons" belonging to the Hmar tribe were killed.

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum and the Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust, two influential bodies, stated that the award amounted to an endorsement of "extrajudicial killings" of "villager volunteers who tried to defend" Hmar-Kuki villagers in Jiribam against a possible attack by "armed miscreants" from Meitei community.

'Anathema to rule of law': Shadow of stock witnesses persists

SC recently ordered a policeman's removal for using such people in multiple cases

AT COPS' BECK AND CALL

- 'Stock witness' is a person kept by police, brought forward as directed
- They are used in illegal cases to sign panchnamas during searches to support prosecution
- Police often have lists of such people who are kept on standby
- SC condemned the practice as 'an anathema to a country governed by the rule of law'

SATISH JHA
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

The 1980 Supreme Court verdict in Prem Chand (Paniwala) vs Union of India is regarded as a landmark judgment that curtailed the unfettered power of the police in issuing externment orders. The phrase "who will police the police?" is still cited from this verdict to emphasise that fundamental rights and personal liberty cannot be left at the mercy of law enforcement.

However, not many know that the petitioner, Prem Chand, was a "permanent stock witness" for the police.

Court records reveal that he earned the moniker Paniwala from his teenage years, when he sold soft drinks near Delite Cinema in New Delhi. He owned several mobile carts equipped to refrigerate water, often stationed on the roadside, sheltered by police. Over time, he became closely associated with the police. He revealed in the court that at the age of 25, he was implicated in a gambling case, after which he was "forced to become a permanent pawn of the police".

Over the years, Prem Chand became a wealthy man and refused to comply with police demands. In retaliation, the police issued an externment order, which he challenged before the SC. He claimed he had served as a "stock witness", providing tailored testimonies in 3,000 cases.

The top court was "flabbergasted" by this revelation. Paniwala's counsel produced several hundred summonses in which he had been listed as a witness. The court observed, "Were he not omnipresent, how could he testify in so many cases, save by a versatile genius for loyal unveracity?"

Two weeks ago, on January 13, a division bench of the Supreme Court directed the Madhya Pradesh government to remove a Station House Officer (SHO) from duty for using the same witnesses in multiple criminal cases.

This order has once again brought the practice of "stock witnesses" in criminal proceedings into focus. The apex court condemned it as "an anathema to a country governed by the rule of law".

Even in high-profile cases such as the Mumbai Narcotics Control Bureau's proceedings against actor Shahrukh Khan's son Aryan in a drug-related matter, it was reported that the NCB had relied on several people who had served as 'panch' witnesses.

Courts have also observed that the sheer volume of cases, coupled with chronic staff shortages, makes it difficult to detect and gather evidence. This institutional strain frequently leads to the practice of keeping witnesses on standby.

"How many respectable citizens would willingly serve as witnesses for the police? No one wants to be entangled with the police or the courts, given the risks involved. Consider the case of Asaram (the self-styled godman convicted of rape in Gujarat), where several crucial witnesses were murdered," said a senior criminal lawyer.

Experts say that in most illegal cases, panch witnesses are used. Though not material witnesses, they are required during search and seizure operations to sign the panchnama and support the prosecution. Courts have observed that police keep lists of such people, calling them to sign documents, sometimes for money.

200 more suspected stray dog deaths in T'gana; toll tops 1,000

SNV SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

About 300 canines were allegedly killed in Pegadapally village of Jagtial district by administering poisonous injections on January 22. PTI FILE

TEJOVANTH ANUPOJU
Coalition of Animal Welfare Organisations, Telangana

"Extensive scientific research and global studies show that mass culling and relocation fail to manage stray dog populations. These methods create vacuums that are often filled by immigration and breeding, thereby worsening conflicts. The law is clear: catch, vaccinate, sterilise, and release. This is the only scientific, humane, and legal approach, yet it's not properly implemented.

Another mass killing of stray dogs has surfaced in Telangana, with around 200 suspected deaths reported from Pathipaka village in Hanamkonda district. Over the past month, such incidents have claimed about 1,000 stray dogs across villages in the state.

Activists said they received information that 200 stray dogs were killed in Pathipaka village, Shayampeta mandal, about a month ago.

"On Monday, I visited the village along with other members of the Stray Animal Foundation of India (SAFI). Some villagers said the dogs were brutally killed on the orders of the local panchayat secretary. We learned that the bodies were buried at a specific site. We approached the police and requested an FIR against the panchayat secretary and those hired to carry out the killings," Stray Animal Foundation of India's A Goutam said on Monday.

Animal welfare activists suspect that during the recent panchayat polls, many candidates promised to eliminate threats posed by dogs and monkeys. While monkeys are captured and relocated to nearby forests, newly elected sarpanches allegedly hired professionals to poison stray dogs with syringes while they slept.

The canines reportedly died within minutes, and their carcasses were buried on the outskirts of villages.

Those who kill the dogs are said to charge around Rs 500 per animal, covering both poisoning and disposal. In the past 15 days, villages in Telangana have reported at least four such incidents, resulting in the deaths of around 900 stray dogs across several areas.

Why is Centre not probing Adani Group, asks ex-power secy

HYDERABAD, DHNS: Even as reports emerged that the Union Law Ministry refused to serve the US SEC's summons to billionaire Gautam Adani on technical grounds in an alleged bribery case, former Union power secretary and retired IAS officer E A S Sarma asked why the Central government was dragging its feet on a comprehensive judicial inquiry into the allegations of multiple undue favours showered on the Adani Group.

In a letter to Cabinet Secretary T V Somanathan on Monday, he asked if this pointed to connivance.

Sarma also noted that SEBI could have contacted its US counterpart, the SEC, to obtain factual evidence and launch a domestic investigation, but it had not.

Similarly, the CBI could have reached out to the FBI for details and initiated its own probe, yet it hasn't, he noted.

"Is some external agency within the NDA government stubbornly blocking such investigations?" he asked.

"...[A]re not the highest in the NDA government concerned about the allegations based on which the US SEC had approached the US court and the latter issued an indictment? Are not the powers that be in the NDA government worried about corrupt practices alleged to have been committed on Indian soil, resulting in a huge cost burden imposed on millions of electricity consumers in AP?" asked Sarma in the letter.

Sarma said that in his view, the US SEC's allegations were far too serious to be blindly ignored, amid the apparent confusion over the government's refusal to serve the US legal summons on senior promoters of the Adani Group.

"... We have our own investors to worry about, who have put their hard-earned savings into the activities of Adani companies. Are those at the highest at the Centre not concerned about them?" he asked.

Akshardham attack: Guj Pota court discharges 3 accused

AHMEDABAD, DHNS: A special designated court has discharged three accused from the Akshardham terror attack case after finding no fresh evidence against them.

The acquittal is based on the Supreme Court's 2014 judgment, when it held the previous six accused innocent while discarding the Gujarat Police's investigation.

Designated Prevention of Terrorism Act (Pota) judge Hemang R Rawal pronounced the order on January 17, discharging Abdul Sulaiman Ajmeri, Mohammad Farooq Muhammad Hanif Shaikh, and Mohammad Yasin alias Yasin Bhatt.

The court held that the prosecution didn't have any fresh material in the case that the apex court had not examined. The discharged were arrested separately in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

CM likely to launch KPS project in Shivamogga

SHIVAMOGGA, DHNS: Minister for School Education and Literacy Madhu Bangarappa on Monday said that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah may launch the Karnataka Public School (KPS) project in Shivamogga either in February or March.

Shivamogga district incharge minister Madhu, interacting with journalists after participating in the Republic Day celebrations, said that the government had initially approved the establishment of 500 KPS institutions--schools wherein LKG to II PU classes will be integrated under one roof.

"However, the government has now given its nod for setting up 900 KPS schools at an estimated cost of Rs 3,500 crore. Our aim is to set up many of these schools in Kalyana Karnataka region. Students at these schools will be provided textbooks and notebooks free of cost," said Madhu.

Forest department report lists glaring violations by KCRE, no evidence against ARRS

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

The forest department's inquiry into unauthorised commercial activities in Agumbe of Western Ghats has found glaring violations by Kalinga Centre for Rainforest Ecology (KCRE), but found no evidence to back charges against Agumbe Rainforest Research Centre (ARRS).

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre had ordered a probe against the two organisations after multiple complaints.

The inquiry reports by Shivamogga Circle Chief Conservator of Forest K T Hanumanthappa dated Sept 30, 2025 provide details of violations at KCRE research centre, including commercial activities without necessary clearances, commercial activities centred around wildlife without permission and violation of eco-sensitive zone rule and trespassing, for which a case was booked. Copies of inquiry reports are with *DH*.

The reports submitted to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Bengaluru, said KCRE run by P Gowri Shankar operated from a 2 acre 23 gunta property located just 340 metre from the boundary of the Someshwara wildlife sanctuary and well within the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) as well as 160 metres away from the Hosur reserve forest.

The officer expressed concerns over herping tour organised in the night with use of torch light.

In 2024, the deputy commissioner of Shivamogga permitted Gowri Shankar to convert 26 gunta of land for "residential personal housing."

However, the centre has three cottages, a separate wooden cottage for Gowri Shankar, a kitchen, toilet and other facilities. A person was charged about Rs 16,000 to 31,000 per night in two- or three-day workshops.

The report said KCRE has been registered as a micro enterprise providing "holiday homes and private guest houses". "These elements prima facie show a plan to develop and use the place and buildings for commercial purpose," it said.

The report said many of the programmes organised by KCRE were centred around "wildlife attraction based activities" conducted within ESZ and in a thickly wooded area.

"As per section 12 of Someshwara Sanctuary ESZ notification, the buildings and activities come under regulated activities. They require permission from ESZ monitoring committee," it said.

Defence questioned

It questioned the defence offered by Gowri Shankar that the activities were aimed at creating awareness.

There were no approved plans and schedules, no clearances by authorities or a monitoring mechanism and the activities were run without checks, it said.

Lastly, the report said action has been taken in one instance in which the department registered a case under Wildlife (Protection) Act against Gowri Shankar based on a video clip, which prima facie showed violation of Sec 9 of the Act. In another instance, the department registered a trespassing case.

DH sent a detailed query to KCRE and shared a certified copy of a report. "We have only now been privy to the report through your communication. We will verify the same with the concerned authorities. After looking over the contents of the report, our office will decide on appropriate course of action," Sharmila Gowri Shankar, assistant director, KCRE said in response.

A separate report on ARRS said the organisation is situated in a 4 acre 27 gunta property in Tallur, 22 metres from Someshwara wildlife sanctuary. It has 2 buildings older than 18 years and 3 cottages. While not commenting on clearances issued to properties, the report said the personal bank accounts of ARRS manager Ajay Giri showed no evidence of commercialisation of research permissions.

To a question, Shivamogga Deputy Conservator of Forests Ajjaiah G R said as per instructions from higher-ups, both organisations have been told to get clearances for any activity that involves commercial gains.

On violations, he said, "The reports have been submitted. The department and government will take action".

'Gadgil worked on ideas in 80s & 90s that are hot topics today'

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bangalore International Centre (BIC) commemorated environmentalist Madhav Gadgil's life and legacy at a special memorial meeting on January 26 — a fitting date, speakers noted, for a thinker who "had a deeply democratic sensibility and embodied the finest values of the Indian Republic".

Gadgil, who passed on January 7 at the age of 83, spent over three decades at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, where he founded the Centre for Ecological Sciences and helped build one of India's most influential ecology institutions.

Moderated by historian Ramachandra Guha, the panel brought together two scientists, two economists, a journalist and a historian — reflecting the breadth of Gadgil's influence.

The panel included Harini Nagendra, Gurudas Nulkar, John Kurien, Nagesh Hegde and Uma Ramakrishnan.

"He was a highly pedigreed scientist with a PhD from Harvard," Guha said, "but also that rare scientist who reached out to his fellow citizens through scholarship, restless fieldwork and democratic instincts".

Gadgil's early scientific work was foundational. His 1972 paper on life-history trade-offs remains a citation classic.

"To this day, it is cited over 2,000 times," said molecular ecologist Uma Ramakrishnan. Yet, Gadgil repeatedly reinvented himself, moving from mathematical ecology to human–environment relationships, sacred groves, biodiversity and governance — decades before these became mainstream concerns.

"He worked on ideas in the 1980s and 1990s that are hot topics today," Uma noted.

Equally important was Gadgil's insistence that science belongs in the public domain. "We must do low-cost science, science in our backyard and science that speaks to India's conditions," he often argue — recalled Harini Nagendra, who highlighted his efforts to communicate ecology through columns, storytelling and public engagement. Gadgil's democratic vision shaped initiatives like the People's Biodiversity Registers and Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel report.

As economist Gurudas Nulkar said the core lesson of Gadgil's life was simple, yet radical: "Conservation is deeply & inseparably linked to democracy and social justice".

Tariff cuts likely as EU trade...

Trade deal, from Page 1

"The visit will add momentum to the deepening engagement and cooperation between India and Europe across diverse sectors," Modi wrote on X.

The 27-nation bloc EU is India's biggest trade partner, with bilateral trade in goods recording $136.6 billion in the financial year 2024-25. India's exports to the EU stood at $75.9 billion, while imports were $60.7 billion during the year.

"Because both economies specialise in different segments, tariff elimination works as a cost-reduction tool rather than a displacement shock," said Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) founder Ajay Srivastava.

"An India–EU FTA would thus deliver classic trade gains—higher volumes, deeper integration and stronger industrial competitiveness on both sides—at a moment when such economically rational trade arrangements are becoming increasingly rare," Srivastava added. India exports labour-intensive, downstream products, while the EU supplies capital goods, technology and industrial inputs—making tariff cuts mutually beneficial.

According to sources, the two sides are likely to agree on the elimination of tariffs on labour-intensive sectors like textiles, handicrafts and gems and jewellery.

"The European Union is the world's largest apparel market, and the India–EU FTA represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for India's garment sector, which currently exports over $4.5 billion worth of apparel to the EU," said A Sakthivel, Chairman, Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC).

SC against imposing fiscal, trade burdens based on unpublished notification

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court has said that the imposition of fiscal or trade burdens based on an unpublished notification would erode commercial confidence and offend the rule of law, which the court must steadfastly guard against.

A bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Alok Aradhe said natural justice required that a law must be promulgated or published before it could become operative.

It must be broadcast in some recognisable way so that all men might know what it was, or, at the very least, there must be some special rule, regulation, customary channel by or through which such knowledge could be acquired with exercise of due and reasonable diligence, the court added.

"Law, to bind, must first exist. And to exist, it must be made known in the manner ordained by the legislature," the bench said.

In a recent judgment, the court allowed an appeal filed by Viraj Impex Pvt Ltd against the Delhi High Court's December 21, 2018, judgment that dismissed its writ petition challenging a notification issued by the Central government imposing a Minimum Import Price on certain steel products.

The apex court said a notification issued under Section 3 of the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992, acquired the force of law only upon its publication in the official gazette, and the expression "date of this notification" must necessarily mean the date of such publication.

On February 5, 2016, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade uploaded the notification on its website, introducing the minimum import price for specified steel products. The document contained the endorsement "To be published in the Official Gazette of India". Admittedly, the notification was published in the official gazette on February 11, 2016.

The appellants, on February 8, 2016, applied for registration of their Letters of Credit under transitional protection contemplated by para 1.05(b) of the Foreign Trade Policy.

They contended that the notification, published in the official gazette on February 11, 2016, could not be applied to imports covered by Letters of Credit opened earlier.

Allowing their plea, the apex court bench said once the legislature had prescribed the specified mode of promulgation, the executive could not introduce an alternative mode and attribute legal consequences to it.

"A notification cannot operate in a fragmented manner. In law, it is born only upon publication in the official gazette, and it is from that date alone that rights may be curtailed or obligations imposed. To hold otherwise, would permit unpublished delegated legislation to burden citizens, a proposition expressly rejected by this court in a long line of decisions," the bench said.

The court held that the notification could not have acquired the force of law before its publication.

Lease not renewed for 16 yrs...

College, from Page 1

"Hence, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the matter would be taken up at the next meeting," the minister said. In 2022-23, MLACW got its 'autonomous' status renewed up to 2031-32 by the University Grants Commission. While issuing a government order, BCU authorities realised that MLACW's land lease had not been renewed since 2008.

It was also found that there were lapses by both the university and the government as MLACW was given a no-objection certificate, allowing it to apply for extension of the 'autonomous' status. Apparently, notices are being issued to officials who issued the NOC.

The Trust has clarified that it was talking to the government since 2008 seeking renewal of land lease for 60 years. Trust Chairperson S S Naganand expressed confidence of getting the land lease renewed and that a delegation would meet Siddaramaiah on Tuesday. The Trust also pointed out that it has written 126 letters to the government.

According to managing trustee K Jairaj, 70% of students come from a humble background. "The Trust provides freeships to students who can't pay fees. We are not here to make profits. In fact, some of our trustees donate to the Trust," he added.

DECCAN HERALD
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Manipur's peace hinges on political intent

It will soon be three years since Manipur plunged into a state of conflict and turmoil, and there is still no credible sign of a return to normalcy. More than 260 killings and large-scale displacement of people have been reported during this period, marked by intense distrust between the Meiteis and the Kukis, the state's two dominant communities. The killing of a Meitei man, Rishikant Singh, who was visiting his wife, a Kuki, in the Kuki-dominated Churachandpur district, is a comment both on the past and the present of Manipur. Their marriage is a reminder of the state's past, when the two communities could live together. But his killing, followed by the circulation of a video showing the act, sends out a chilling message on the deadly turn the estrangement has taken.

The video footage of the killing was circulated along with a message: No peace, no popular government. The question of whether peace or popular government should come first has been debated for a long time in the state. It was a popular government under Chief Minister N Biren Singh, a Meitei who identified himself with the community, that mishandled the situation, aggravated it, and made peace more difficult to achieve. Before the crisis, relationships involving people from the two communities did not lead to violence. Now, it is difficult to imagine such relationships after an extended period of strife and bloodshed. The first step towards enduring peace will be to eliminate the lack of trust among the communities. Only a popular government that can reach out to both camps with a credible intent for peace can make a difference. The President's Rule, which was imposed in February last year, has not provided an administration that the people could trust. Over the 11 months, events in the state have shown that the interim arrangement has failed, while efforts to establish a representative, popular government have not made headway either.

Meitei man's killing calls for urgent, credible processes to establish peace through a popular government

Legislators belonging to the two communities met in Delhi last month, but there was no agreement. The meeting, however, signals progress which should be built on. The President's Rule will certainly have to be extended, but its continuance should not hinder efforts to arrive at a political consensus that will, eventually, shape a popular government. The killing of Singh calls for greater caution from the administration – it should not be allowed to ignite a fresh phase of unrest in the state. Vigil must be intensified to prevent retaliatory action that risks extending the crisis and derailing efforts towards a political resolution.

Bike taxis and the road to regulation

The Karnataka High Court's order lifting the ban on bike taxis deserves to be welcomed because it restores a vital mobility option in Bengaluru – a city choking on traffic gridlock and public transport gaps – while safeguarding the livelihoods of drivers. The division bench held that motorcycles fall within the definition of transport vehicles under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and ruled that a blanket ban amounted to a *de facto* prohibition on the constitutional right to practise a profession. The ban, earlier upheld by the single bench, threw lakhs of riders, mostly gig workers, into uncertainty. At the same time, commuters lost an affordable option for quick connectivity. With auto-rickshaws notoriously unreliable, bike taxis have emerged as a practical necessity, filling a glaring structural gap.

The background to the ban reveals a deeper governance failure. Although the state notified an Electric Bike Taxi Scheme in 2021 and the Centre later issued guidelines encouraging states to permit such services, Karnataka chose not to translate them into a regulatory framework. The government also failed to take a clear stand before the court, arguing that it had no policy on bike taxis and did not intend to frame one either. Now, with bike taxis back on the road, the policy paralysis has left a vacuum, forcing commuters to avail these services with no safety protocols in place.

Lifting of the ban restores a crucial mobility option, but this is also the time to frame a strong policy

The court order does not grant bike taxis or aggregators immunity from the law, and the government must now frame a comprehensive regulatory framework without delay. This should include mandatory commercial registration, clear permit conditions, and insurance that explicitly covers pillion riders. Verified rider identification, police background checks, real-time digital tracking, and visible permit display must be non-negotiable. Equally important is institutionalised rider training. Structured programmes covering road safety, defensive riding, passenger etiquette, gender sensitisation, and basic first aid should be mandatory before permits are issued. Aggregators should be held accountable for compliance and grievance redressal, while the government must ensure a level-playing field through uniform rules that apply equally to bike taxis, autos, and cab operators. The High Court has cleared the legal roadblock. It is now for the state to prove that it can regulate a modern mobility solution that its overstretched cities urgently need. What the state needs now is not obstructionist policy or bureaucratic red tape, but a vision that recognises bike taxis as a vital component of an integrated urban transport ecosystem rather than a threat to outdated monopolies.

MAPPING MOBILITY

Why gridlocked Bengaluru must rethink its streets

Solutions should pivot on integrated planning, prioritise right-of-way, and treat streets as shared public assets

MADHAV PAI AND PAWAN MULUKUTLA

Bengaluru, a city of about 14 million people, is poised to grow into a 20-million-plus metropolis within the next decade. As the city expands and rural-urban boundaries blur, the need for smart, responsive, and accountable transport systems that enable people to move safely, efficiently, and equitably has never been more urgent.

Bengaluru today has an estimated 12,800-km road network, including about 1,345 km of arterial and sub-arterial roads that form the backbone of its economy and daily life – connecting people to livelihoods, education, healthcare, and opportunity. A majority of Bengalureans walk at some point in their journeys, whether for the entire trip, the last mile to public transport, exercise, or everyday errands. On average, about 2,000 vehicles are registered in Bengaluru every day, with many of them occupying valuable street space as on-street parking.

Streets continue to house shops, vendors, and an active public life. However, the institutions and systems responsible for designing, operating, and maintaining this vast road network have not kept pace, struggling to manage escalating vehicle ownership, growing parking pressures, and increasingly complex patterns of street use.

The result is visible every day: frequent gridlock, unsafe conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, fragmented footpaths, and streets that fail to perform their most basic function – moving people reliably and creating a common space for belonging. These pressures will only intensify unless Bengaluru shifts from reactive fixes to institutionalised, system-level management of its road network. The challenge Bengaluru faces is not merely one of road capacity. It is a challenge of governance; of how public road space is treated, managed, and held accountable as a public asset. Addressing this requires strengthening three interlinked pillars: right-of-way (RoW), network design and management, and road asset management.

Streamlining the right of way

Often overlooked, but a critical component of mobility infrastructure is the right-of-way management. Streets are not just strips of asphalt; they are shared public spaces extending boundary to boundary, accommodating vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, utilities, vendors, trees, and drainage infrastructure.

In Bengaluru today, RoW management is largely *ad-hoc*. Encroachments, parking spillover, and informal activities often erode space meant for walking and cycling. While traffic police manage vehicle movement on the carriageway, no single agency is responsible for the RoW end-to-end – from footpath continuity to regulating/monitoring activities within the corridor.

This gap has real consequences. Footpaths disappear, signals prioritise vehicles over pedestrians, and bus stops and crossings are poorly integrated. The

city ends up managing traffic symptoms rather than street performance.

Recognising this, Bengaluru has begun to articulate better standards. The *Namma Raste Kaipidi*, adopted as a guiding manual by city agencies, provides practical guidance on street design, footpaths, junctions, and safety. We need RoW management to be institutionalised – with clear responsibility for protecting pedestrian space, coordinating utilities, enforcing encroachment norms, and maintaining service levels across the corridor.

Network design and management

Street networks should be designed and optimised to move people, vehicles and goods efficiently. Today, what we have is a set of isolated projects spanning roads, tunnels, and underpasses. Network design currently occurs only at the master planning stage when RoWs are earmarked on city peripheries.

What we need instead is a scientific, data-driven network analysis conducted at regular intervals – every five years, annually, or whenever major disruptions occur (such as large infrastructure works or significant road closures). This approach would allow the city to proactively manage mobility demand, ensure resilience, and optimise street performance in real time.

Cities need to address this through efficient network design and management; defining street hierarchies, arterial and sub-arterial roads, prioritising movement of people over vehicles, coordinating signals along corridors, and managing demand through pricing, parking, and access controls. There is a need to create an institution with responsibility for network design aligned with the objectives of safety, reliability, and equity.

Roads as life-long public assets

Roads must be treated as life-long public assets that are not only planned, funded, and developed but also systematically managed and maintained over their entire life cycle. A Road Asset Management System (RAMS) can help enable this shift. Such a system maintains a comprehensive inventory of every road corridor and its elements, including carriageways, footpaths, drainage, junctions, signage, and lighting – assigning each a condition rating, performance standard, and maintenance timeline over 10-20 years. Instead of quick fixes, the city must invest in preventive maintenance, drainage upkeep, pavement strength, and utility coordination so failures occur less frequently and cost less to fix.

Globally, cities that have adopted asset management approaches have demonstrated lower life-cycle costs, better service quality, and greater transparency. For Bengaluru, this approach also supports public transport, walking, and cycling, because the carriageway, footpath, drainage, and safety features are managed together rather than as disconnected works.

Tools exist to support this shift. With geospatial mapping, satellite imagery, OpenStreetMap data, and field surveys, a citywide road inventory can be created relatively quickly. What is missing is not technology, but institutional ownership and accountability to use this data consistently in budgeting and decision-making.

There are positive signs which indicate a turn in policy and practice. The newly established Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), with its citywide mandate, is well-positioned to anchor a more integrated approach. Recent efforts to build in-house urban design and planning capacity signal the acknowledgement of issues and a willingness to address root causes and not just the symptoms. What remains is to tie these elements together through formal mandates, defined responsibilities, performance metrics, and, of course, collaboration.

(Madhav is CEO and Pawan is Executive Director – Integrated Transport, Clean Air and Hydrogen, Sustainable Cities Programme, at WRI India)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

Where the Common Man still stands

A goat in specs and an angry neighbour marked the birth of R K Laxman's genius

MAYURNATH GANTI

With one stroke of his pencil, R K Laxman (RKL, for short) could achieve what a hundred words could seldom accomplish. His caricatures of the world and its affairs, seen through the observant eyes of the 'Common Man' made him the past master of socio-political satire.

It is common to erect statues to perpetuate the memory of someone who lived in flesh and blood. But not so for an imaginary character. Pune has one for the Common Man—an uncommon tribute to RKL's fecundity.

Any avid follower of RKL's caricatures has many to remember. If I were to recollect one at random, it would be the one that appeared immediately after the death of Dr Salim Ali, our revered ornithologist. RKL drew a bird perched on a treetop, looking down at Dr Ali standing below, binoculars dangling from his neck. The caricature was so sharp that the curiosity in the bird's eyes seemed to ask, "Who is this man taking such an interest in me?" It outdid Dr Salim Ali's own scientific inquisitiveness – this time, in the bird.

RKL was a good writer too. I distinctly remember reading an article he wrote in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* in the early 1980s, recounting how he became a caricaturist – almost unintentionally. What follows is a paraphrase.

During his childhood in Mysuru, his parents subscribed to several newspapers and magazines, which lay on a table in the veranda. A neighbour – a retired government employee – would visit every morning at a fixed hour to read and quietly leave after reading.

One day, little RKL came across a picture of a goat in a magazine that fired his imagination. In a fit of childish pranks, he drew a pair of spectacles on the goat's face and left the magazine on the table before going to school.

At the appointed hour, the old man stepped in. Everything seemed normal, calm and quiet -until he exploded like a volcano, shouting and drawing the elders into the veranda. He berated them for not bringing up their children with propriety, hurled the magazine to the floor, and stormed off, swearing never ever to step into the veranda ever again.

Everyone was aghast. An uneasy air filled the veranda. Why was he angry? Nobody knew. Little RKL, summoning some pluck, picked up the magazine. To everyone's astonishment, the goat with spectacles bore a striking resemblance to the old man. Serendipity – if this is not it, what else could it be?

He ended the article with these words: "Thus I stumbled across the key to caricature, unintentionally." It was a defining moment – the future RKL was in the making.

In the English common law tradition we share, there is an attractive personality called the "Ordinary Reasonable Man". Where do we find him? Not essentially on the streets of London, but very much so in our home-spun Common Man.

It is fitting to remember R K Laxman today, 11 years after he passed away on January 26, 2015.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Karnataka should work for inclusive prosperity

Apropos 'Karnataka's road to a trillion' (Jan 26), the vision of a trillion dollar economy sounds powerful on paper, but its real success will be seen in everyday lives. Growth should not only be reflected in GSDP numbers or global rankings, but in whether ordinary citizens feel a difference. While Bengaluru continues to drive services and investment, many parts of Karnataka still struggle with uneven infrastructure, job access, and agricultural uncertainty. For a young workforce, growth must mean stable employment, affordable living, and opportunities beyond the capital. A trillion-dollar economy should translate into better roads, reliable public services, and dignity of work for all Kannadigas.

Kavita Tewari, Bengaluru

Guiding the future

The recent CBSE circular dated 19th January 2026, mandating the appointment of career counsellors in its schools, addresses a pressing need. However, are there enough trained career counsellors in the country? There are about 30,000 CBSE schools in the country. Where a career counsellor is not available, the notification provides for the appointment of teachers who must acquire the competencies of career counselling. There is therefore an urgent need for capacity building. If career guidance is to be effectively delivered, the schools must make provisions in the timetable for at least 20 to 25 periods over the year dedicated exclusively to career guidance.

Gideon Arulmani, Bengaluru

Peace or politics?

Apropos 'Board of Peace lacking in credibility' (Jan 26), the US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace, envisaged to be a new international entity of nations, does not augur well for the working of the UN. India will do well to take a cue from the UK and France and stay away from this.

M Basavaraj, Davanagere

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

India has become such a powerful country that other countries are astonished... This is an India that provides free rations to 80 crore people.

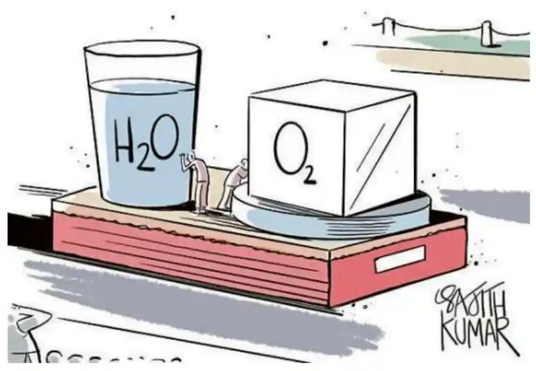
Dinesh Sharma, BJP MP

Welfare's purpose should be to eliminate, as far as possible, the need for its own existence.

Ronald Reagan

TO BE PRECISE

The Republic Day tableau that wasn't



IN PERSPECTIVE

State of budgets: Repair to redesign

Fiscal strategies cannot stay uniform; they need to be customised to address the states' changing demographic realities

RAJESHWARI U R

The fiscal position of Indian states in 2025-26 reflects relative stability rather than comfort. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s *State Finances: A Study of Budgets of 2025-26* indicates that while states have recovered from pandemic-era fiscal stress, the nature of pressures has shifted from short-term deficit control to deeper structural challenges. Policymakers now face the task of redesigning state finances to manage demographic transition, rising social expenditure, and limits to conventional revenue mobilisation. At the aggregate level, fiscal discipline has largely been maintained, with the consolidated gross fiscal deficit rising from below 3% of GDP in the previous three years to 3.3% in 2024-25 and budgeted at the same level for 2025-26. This deviation reflects higher capital expenditure and the accounting treatment of the Centre's 50-year interest-free loans for capital investment, rather than fiscal laxity.

The quality of state spending has shown significant improvement. Revenue expenditure, which peaked at 14.9% of GDP in 2020-21, declined to 13.3% in 2024-25 before being budgeted to rise moderately to 14.6% in 2025-26, without any significant compression of social sector spending, suggesting rationalisation of non-essential outlays rather than welfare retrenchment. Simultaneously, capital expenditure increased sharply from 2.3% of GDP in 2020-21 to a budgeted 3.2% in 2025-26, raising its share in total expenditure from 13.4% to 18%. Most notably, the share of revenue deficit in the gross fiscal deficit fell from over 46% to below 7%, signalling a structural shift from consumption-oriented borrowing towards an investment-led fiscal strategy.

Yet, this improvement masks vulnerabilities. Outstanding liabilities of states stood at 28.1% at the end of March 2024 and are budgeted to rise again to 29.2% by March 2026. While debt sustainability indicators remain favourable due to softer interest burdens and longer maturity profiles, the absolute level of debt constrains future fiscal flexibility, especially as interest-free central loans taper off. The RBI report repeatedly flags contingent liabilities and guarantees as latent risks that could crystallise in an adverse macroeconomic environment.

On the revenue side, states face a more structural challenge. Revenue receipts declined as a share of GDP in 2024-25, largely due to the sharp fall in grants-in-aid following the end of GST compensation and post-devolution revenue deficit grants. While tax revenues have shown resilience, driven mainly by state GST, excise duties, and stamp duties, these sources remain highly concentrated, with four taxes accounting for nearly 90% of collections, making state revenues vulnerable to sector-specific shocks and cyclical downturns.

Tailoring the approach

The most compelling argument in the RBI report, however, comes from its focus on demographic transition. States are moving along sharply divergent demographic trajectories. Youthful states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh enjoy expanding working-age populations, while ageing states such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu face rising old-age dependency ratios and shrinking tax bases. The report shows that the old-age dependency ratio ranges from around 14 in youthful states to over 30 in ageing states, with direct implications for pension liabilities, healthcare spending, and long-term fiscal sustainability. A uniform fiscal strategy is, therefore, increasingly untenable.

This demographic divergence fundamentally alters the priorities for the upcoming budgets, both at the Union and state levels. For youthful states, the fiscal window of opportunity is narrow and time-bound. The RBI's analysis indicates that unless higher spending on education, skilling, and health translates into productive employment, the demographic dividend could easily turn into a demographic liability. For intermediate states, the challenge is to sustain growth while preparing fiscally for ageing through pension reforms and health system strengthening. For ageing states, the emphasis must shift towards revenue augmentation, healthcare efficiency, and workforce participation reforms, including greater female and elderly labour force participation.

The implications for the next budget are clear: the focus must shift beyond aggregate deficit targets towards differentiated fiscal strategies aligned with demographic realities. While continued support for state capital expenditure remains essential, it must be complemented by stronger incentives for human capital investment, institutional reforms, and efforts to broaden states' revenue bases through improved tax administration, digital enforcement, and rationalisation of user charges, rather than reliance on volatile transfers.

The RBI's study makes it evident that India's state finances are no longer in crisis but are entering a phase of structural stress driven by long-term forces. Fiscal repair has largely been achieved; fiscal re-engineering is now unavoidable, and the success of the 2025-26 budget will hinge on whether policymakers respond with forward-looking, demographically informed, and institutionally grounded strategies rather than incremental adjustments to an increasingly strained fiscal architecture.

(The writer is an associate professor at the Department of Economics, Christ University)

As neighbours move on, India must recalibrate its foreign policy

K S TOMAR

India's increasing isolation in its immediate neighbourhood is not a sudden development but the cumulative outcome of diplomatic complacency, strategic under-reaction, and a persistent failure to translate political intent into credible delivery. While New Delhi continues to project itself as South Asia's natural leader, it has struggled to convert goodwill into lasting influence, allowing China to occupy the strategic space with speed, coherence, and purpose.

The erosion of India's regional standing is therefore less about hostile neighbours and more about self-inflicted gaps in policy execution, follow-through, and political sensitivity. The limitations of India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy', conceived in 2008 and intensified post-2014, however, are not solely the result of external disruptions; they are rooted equally in structural and political shortcomings.

The contrast with China is stark and instructive. Through the 'Belt and Road Initiative', defence diplomacy, sustained political engagement, and aggressive narrative management, Beijing has woven deep economic and political dependencies across South Asia. India, by comparison, has relied on episodic outreach, delayed project implementation, and an assumption of automatic primacy rooted in geography and history. That assumption no longer holds. Smaller neighbours today act with sharper strategic agency, leveraging India-China rivalry to maximise benefits, and New Delhi has been slow to adapt to this new realism.

Donald Trump's return to the White House has further complicated India's neighbourhood calculus. His transactional foreign policy, marked by abrupt shifts, selective engagement, and a preference for short-term leverage, has unsettled regional equations. Renewed tactical engagement with Pakistan—driven by counterterrorism optics, Afghan spillovers, or episodic bargaining—undercuts India's effort to diplomatically isolate Islamabad on terrorism. At the same time, Washington's inconsistent signalling on China and reduced commitment to multilateral frameworks have encouraged South Asian states to hedge more aggressively. As U.S. posture oscillates, India's leadership space narrows, forcing it to manage uncertainty generated far beyond the region.

These external pressures make an internal course correction unavoidable. The first requirement is sustained high-level political re-engagement. Visits by the Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister to Dhaka, Colombo, Kathmandu, Naypyidaw, and Malé must resume with intent rather than symbolism. India must also consciously abandon perceptions of partisanship in domestic political contests across the region and reaffirm a posture of principled neutrality, especially during elections and political transitions.

Second, long-pending deliverables must move beyond memorandum-level diplomacy. The Teesta water-sharing agreement, cross-border connectivity projects with Nepal and Bhutan, and infrastructure commitments in Myanmar require time-bound execution. India should also establish a South Asian Economic Assistance Corpus rooted in grants rather than loans to clearly differentiate itself from China's debt-driven model and to restore confidence in Indian commitments.

Third, military diplomacy must be revitalised as an instrument of reassurance rather than dominance. Joint exercises, officer training programmes, intelligence sharing, and the supply of affordable defence hardware can help reassert India's credentials as a dependable security partner, particularly for Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and the Maldives. Fourth, the SAGAR initiative must acquire operational depth. By aligning with Quad partners, India can co-develop transparent infrastructure in ports, logistics, maritime surveillance, and undersea cables, offering credible alternatives to opaque Chinese projects.

Soft power remains India's most underutilised asset. Scholarships, youth exchanges, cultural diplomacy, Bollywood, yoga, and cricket can reconnect India with civil societies and emerging political classes across South Asia. Equally critical is reclaiming narrative space. From FATF to BIMSTEC and BRICS+, India must lead coalitions while consistently exposing Pakistan's terror infrastructure. A modern media strategy using local languages, regional digital platforms, and independent journalism support is essential to counter China-Pakistan propaganda in real time.

Missed opportunities underline the costs of drift. In Myanmar, India's cautious disengagement after the 2021 coup weakened its leverage even as China and Russia moved swiftly. In Sri Lanka, early assistance during the 2022 economic crisis generated goodwill, but delayed infrastructure execution allowed China to reassert control over strategic assets such as Hambantota Port and Colombo Port City.

Bangladesh, once a close partner, is quietly recalibrating. The unresolved Teesta issue, perceived political alignment with the Awami League, and the fallout of CAA-NRC legislation have eroded bipartisan goodwill, while China continues its economic expansion. The Maldives reflects another avoidable setback, where delayed engagement enabled the "India Out" narrative and the withdrawal of Indian troops, emboldening Chinese ambitions in the Indian Ocean.

Nepal remains a diplomatic sore point. The legacy of the 2015 blockade, unresolved boundary disputes, and tone-deaf responses to internal political churn alienated public opinion, particularly among youth. Even Bhutan is cautiously diversifying its diplomatic options, signalling discomfort with India's perceived paternalism. In Afghanistan, India's complete withdrawal after the Taliban takeover erased years of soft-power investment, unlike China, Iran, and Russia, which retained engagement channels.

China's encirclement strategy has thrived amid this inertia. Through BRI projects, arms supplies, and dual-use maritime facilities, Beijing has expanded its footprint across South Asia and the Indian Ocean. Its sharp power—media penetration, elite capture, and digital infrastructure—has steadily eroded India's informational and cultural influence. In multilateral forums, China continues to block India's ambitions while shielding Pakistan.

India's setbacks are not irreversible, but they are instructive. The assumption of automatic leadership has been challenged by China's methodical strategy and India's uneven performance. Military deterrence without diplomatic consensus has clear limits. India must shed the illusion of primacy and become a dependable regional partner that listens, delivers, and shares prosperity. Only then will its neighbours stop hedging and begin embracing its leadership.

(The writer is a strategic affairs columnist and senior political analyst based in Shimla)

Across global scenes of violence, masked power and "fire, ready, aim" politics are corroding democratic legitimacy

THOMAS L FRIEDMAN

Federal agents deploy tear gas to disperse protesters in Minneapolis, near the site where federal agents shot and killed Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old ICU nurse, on January 24. AFP

Minneapolis and Gaza now share the same violent language

Every day now, I sit at my computer and ask myself: What is there left to say about the two news stories I care about most? One is unfolding in my hometown, on the banks of the Mississippi River; the other is unfolding on the West Bank of the Jordan and on both banks of the Wadi Gaza.

Which video should I linger on longest? The footage of Renee Good, shot in the face by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer in Minneapolis while she was clearly trying to evacuate the scene? Or the video from Saturday of federal agents shooting Alex Jeffrey Pretti, an intensive care nurse, after he tried to help a woman who was being pepper-sprayed? Or perhaps the video from Wednesday showing the aftermath of Israeli strikes that killed three Palestinian journalists, among others, in the Gaza Strip? The journalists had been working for a committee providing Egyptian aid and were documenting its distribution at a displacement camp. Or perhaps the videos of Hamas executing rivals and refusing to yield, despite the fact that the war the group ignited October 7, 2023, has resulted in nothing but catastrophe for Palestinians?

These stories have much more in common than you might think. All are driven, in my view, by terrible leaders who prefer easy, violent solutions to the hard work of negotiated problem-solving. These leaders see an iron-fisted approach as the best way to win their next elections: President Donald Trump in the 2026 midterms; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, who is expected to call elections around the same time; and Hamas, in its desperate effort to lead the Palestinian movement in the postwar era, despite having lost the war.

Hamas and ICE also share one very visible trait that I never thought I'd see in the United States: Almost all of their foot soldiers wear masks. My experience as a reporter in the Middle East taught me that people wear masks because they are up to something bad and don't want their faces captured on camera. I saw it often in Beirut and in Gaza; I never expected to see it in Minneapolis. Since when have America's domestic policing forces, charged with defending the Constitution and the rule of law, felt the need to hide their identities?

I understand why Hamas fighters wear masks—they have both Israeli and Palestinian blood on their hands and fear retribution. But if you placed a photo of an ICE officer next to a Hamas militiaman in a news quiz, I would defy you to tell them apart. Memo to the homeland security secretary, Kristi Noem: That is not a good look. What are you hiding?

Good and Pretti were both clearly present as observers — and trying to defend others — yet both were drawn into the chaos and shot at close range by agents who should never have pulled a trigger. Yet the Trump team insists that ICE is blameless. That is not how you build legitimacy for a government effort to track down and deport immigrants lacking permanent legal status.

That same instinct for "fire, ready, aim" is one of the morally corrupting legacies of Israel's war in Gaza. One of the Palestinian journalists killed by the Israeli airstrike Wednesday, Abdel Raouf Shaath, had worked for years as a cameraman for *CBS News* and other outlets; the others were local journalists Mohammad Salah Qishta and Anas Ghneim. They were reportedly on assignment to film aid distribution by the Egyptian Relief Committee when their vehicle was targeted.

Really? Was that the only way to handle the situation during a ceasefire? Immediately launch an airstrike and ask questions later? Israel can assassinate nuclear scientists in Iran in the dead of night from 1,200 miles away, yet it can't distinguish a journalist from a combatant in broad daylight next door? It's shameful. This comes only months after Israeli forces killed *Reuters* journalist Hussam al-Masri on the stairs of Gaza's Nasser Hospital in August.

Netanyahu apologised for that earlier killing. But regarding the three journalists killed last week, the Israeli military released a boilerplate statement saying troops identified "several suspects who operated a drone affiliated with Hamas" and "struck the suspects who activated the drone." The military added that details are being reviewed. That is what it always says. That is how a nation and an army loses its soul.

Here is what is really happening: Netanyahu is running for reelection. Israel currently occupies approximately 53% of the Gaza Strip, with Hamas holding the other 47%. Trump — with help from Egypt, Qatar and Turkey — is pushing for Hamas to disarm, for its military leaders to leave and for the organisation to become a purely political entity. In return, Trump expects Israel to begin a withdrawal toward its own border.

Netanyahu knows that if he runs for election with Hamas still holding political influence in Gaza and the Israeli military pulling back, he will be savaged by the far-right extremists in his coalition. Those allies don't just want to stay in Gaza; they want to annex the West Bank. So Netanyahu wants the war to continue; he wants to provoke Hamas into fighting so he never has to withdraw.

Meanwhile, Hamas is clinging to its weapons to maintain control on the ground. Even if forced to become a political entity, it will do everything in its power to hijack the technocratic Palestinian government the Trump administration is trying to install.

Back at home, Trump seems to believe the chaos in Minneapolis will work for him in November — even though polls show a majority of Americans disapprove of ICE's tactics. He is betting he can run on a "law and order" platform fuelled by anti-immigration sentiment.

There is, however, another view inside the White House. Vice President J D Vance visited Minneapolis last week to urge local officials to cooperate with federal agents to "lower the temperature and lower the chaos." Suddenly, the cynical Vance — of all people — was the voice of calm and reason. I suspect he was channelling the fears of Republican lawmakers who worry that ICE's activities could lead to an electoral disaster in the midterms.

To my friends and family in Minnesota: Stay proud of the way you are documenting abuses and standing up for your neighbours — those with legal papers and those without them — who abide by the law, work hard and enrich our city.

But it is vital that this campaign be accompanied by a loud commitment to immigration reform that both controls the border and creates a legal pathway to citizenship.

The winning message remains: high wall, big gate. Control the border, but increase legal immigration. Democrats must never forget that one reason Trump returned to power was the previous administration's failure to control illegal immigration. Independent voters still care deeply about that.

Trump, Netanyahu and Hamas each have their eyes on the prize: the 2026 elections. The people of Minnesota, Israel and Gaza must keep that in mind. Because if Trump maintains control of Congress, if Netanyahu wins reelection and if Hamas seizes control of the Palestinian movement, all three societies will head into a darkness from which recovery will be agonisingly difficult.

The New York Times

State as censor: Where does Karnataka stand?

PRANATI A S

When the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in recent years—particularly after 2014—screened films like *The Kashmir Files*, *The Kerala Story*, and *The Bengal Files*, and even placed them in competition alongside some of the best films from across the world, it raised questions about the festival's curatorial direction. These films have been widely called out by critics and cinephiles not only for their ideological leanings aligned with that of the ruling dispensation at the Centre but also for their cinematic quality, with several describing them as propaganda and poorly made.

When the Ministry of External Affairs denied permission to screen about 14 films from various countries, including Palestine, at the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan took a strong stand supporting the festival's stated ideological and political position—solidarity with Palestine. He asserted that the festival could continue screening the films irrespective of exemptions.

Now, as the Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFFes) begins on Thursday, there is once again no clarity about the screening of Palestinian films. Will CM Siddaramaiah take a stand?

As of Monday, according to the festival organisers, five films—*All That's Left of You, Palestine 36, The Voice of Hind Rajab, Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk*, and *Yes*—are yet to receive clearance. Apart from these, no other Palestinian film has been cleared so far.

All That's Left of You, which premièred at the Sundance Film Festival, follows a Palestinian family across three generations amid the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. *The Voice of Hind Rajab*, which premièred in Venice, documents Red Crescent volunteers' attempts to rescue six-year-old Hind Rajab, trapped in a car under fire in Gaza. *Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk* follows an Iranian filmmaker in exile who travels to Cairo in an attempt to cross into Gaza; stopped at Rafah, she documents the war through video-call interviews with a photojournalist and her family in devastated northern Gaza. In *Yes*, Israeli filmmaker Nadav Lapid makes a critical commentary about his homeland in the aftermath of the October 7, 2023 attacks.

These films are well-discussed internationally and were also part of the IFFK's curation. *The Voice of Hind Rajab* has also received an Oscar nomination. The organisers at BIFFes say the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Ministry of External Affairs have sought more details about the films. Given that these films have already been widely screened and discussed, the request essentially meant running out the clock, with no clarity on clearance.

Film festivals are not merely platforms to screen hundreds of films or host workshops. They are political spaces that reflect the ideology of the State, and for most government-run festivals, the State's support is vital. They are spaces where people come together for larger causes. At the 82nd Venice International Film Festival, for example, pro-Palestine demonstrations took place with the participation of organisers, filmmakers and artists. At the BAFTA awards in 2024, filmmaker Ken Loach called for a ceasefire in Gaza. In recent years, film festivals have witnessed people and celebrities come together in support of Palestine. And like all forms of art, cinema is political; screening Palestinian films in today's political situation is very important.

In Karnataka, despite a Congress-led government, there has been little visible assertion on such matters by the government. In 2024, Kesari Haravoo's *Kisan Satyagraha*, a documentary on farmers' protest against the farm laws, and the Ukrainian film *20 Days in Mariupol*, which followed Ukrainian journalists trapped in Mariupol and documented the images of war, did not receive clearance from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. BIFFes proceeded without screening these films. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, in recent years, has spoken out on issues ranging from farmers' rights to Palestine and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza; questions remain about how far these positions translate into action.

Will CM Siddaramaiah take a stand this time? If the state government chooses to take a stand, avenues to screen these films may yet be found. Every year, BIFFes screens its opening film at the Vidhana Soudha after the inaugural function. This year, a Palestinian film could serve as that opening film. Even making a statement can be loud enough. If Pinarayi Vijayan could do it, so could Siddaramaiah — provided the Congress-led government is in solidarity with Palestine and is against the divisive politics of the BJP-led central government.

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: JANUARY 1976

South India's first rural bank opened

Bellary, Jan. 26
Finance Minister M. Y. Ghorpade on Sunday opened the first rural bank in South India, the Tungabhadra Grameena Bank, Banapur branch, and its head office here. He said the day was historic in the rural economy of Bellary and Raichur Districts. Though the two districts are rich in natural resources, they have remained poor and hence the resources should be exploited, he said. He said the bank would benefit economically weaker and backward sections in rural areas.

25 YEARS AGO: JANUARY 2001

Over 1,500 killed as quake rocks Gujarat

Ahmedabad, Jan 26
Over 1,500 people were killed in Gujarat in the worst-ever earthquake that devastated the state on Thursday morning. The quake, which measured 6.9 on the Richter scale with its epicentre 20 kms north-east of Bhuj, ravaged large areas of the state demolishing buildings, injuring hundreds, and snapping telecommunication links. A UNI report has put the toll at 2,000 and is likely to increase. The quake, India's worst in its intensity in the last 50 years, triggered tremors that were felt across the country.

OASIS | CHANDER GUPTA

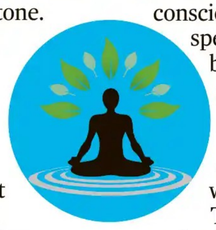
How positive words transform relationships

Choice of words helps us avoid hurting people while at the same time conveying what we have in mind. 'It is about taking control of your words,' a friend recently remarked.

Once I was having a discussion with a colleague over how to build a consensus amongst our team members on an issue; we thought there could be divergence of views. He completely disarmed me with a flattering fiat, 'Will let you take that lead.' Had the phrasing been 'Will you take that lead?' the listening impact would have been rather negative. How the insertion of a small word, 'let', in the sentence changed the colour and flavour of the meaning.

The tone also varies with the text. The utterance of positive words automatically assumes positive tone.

I recall another instance of positive speaking. A friend seemed annoyed over a remark I casually made. Realising that it did not go down well, I asked, "Are you offended?" To the credit of my friend, he simply said 'sort of', instead of flatly saying 'yes'. 'Sort of' took away the bluntness that a 'yes' would have inflicted.



We commonly believe that thinking influences speaking. However, the hypothesis can be true vice versa also. Positive speaking is also likely to induce positive thinking. If we consciously cultivate positive speaking and weigh our words before uttering them, it would gradually germinate positive thinking also. Positive speaking will yield positive results as it strikes the right chords with the target audience.

The purpose of communication is to convey what you have in mind. It is not to hurt or offend others. Words should not be used as barbs. Words become weapons in the mouths of couples indulging in internecine warfare. Nobody likes to hear accusing words. Instead of saying 'you haven't done this' or 'you haven't done that', try to say, 'Please do this.' Words can either be like flowers you are offering to or like stones you are throwing at your listeners. Whatever you offer, the same stuff bounces on you eventually.

The art of communication lies in speaking what you have in mind without sounding like you are accusing or being sarcastic. Positive Speaking is bound to yield positive outcome. Words are a potent tool. It is preferable to sound cool rather than like a fool.

REPUBLIC DAY: Parade showcases Bhairav Battalion, Shaktiban Regiment, Divyastra Battery

Op Sindoor military assets shine at Kartavya Path

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Eight months after Operation Sindoor, India on Monday displayed some of its military assets deployed during the May 2025 conflict with Pakistan, including Rafale combat jets that flew in a 'Sindoor' formation. The Republic Day parade also showcased units raised after the operation, such as the Bhairav Battalion, Shaktiban Regiment and Divyastra battery.

With 150 years of Vande Mataram being the central theme of the parade, six of the 30 tableaux were based on ideas derived from the national song. A resplendent choreography was performed by 2,500 artists to a musical composition by Oscar-winning music director MM Keeravani, with narration by actor Anupam Kher.

President of the European Council Antonio Costa and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen were the chief guests at the 77th Republic Day parade, witnessed by close to 77,000 people sitting on both sides of Kartavya Path.

Twenty-nine aircraft, including 16 fighter jets, participated in the flypast. Among them were six Rafale aircraft from 101 Squadron (Falcons), which flew in the Vajraang formation. An IAF Dhruv advanced light helicopter carried the Sindoor flag.

Earlier, the tri-services tableau highlighted the role of jointness during the conflict last May, when precision strikes by the IAF, swift deployment by the navy near the Pakistan coast and coordinated ground attacks by the army led to Pakistan seeking a ceasefire within four days.

A glass-cased setup on a trailer, portraying an integrated operational centre, depicted the conduct of decisive military action with the use of potent weapon systems such as BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles.

The grand finale featured a single Rafale jet that flew low at a velocity of 900 km per hour before climbing high in front of the saluting dais, executing a Vertical Charlie manoeuvre in which the aircraft revolves on its own axis while ascending. Other weapons paraded along the central boulevard included Akash missiles, universal rocket launcher system Suryastra, Abhra medium-range surface-to-air missiles, T-90 and Arjun tanks.

One interesting feature was the Indian Navy tableau, which included a depiction of the circumnavigation route followed by the Indian Naval Sailing Vessel Tarini as part of Navika Sagar Parikrama-II expedition. Lieutenant Commanders Dilna and Roopa — crew of Navika Sagar Parikrama-II — led the tableau.

Indian Air Force's two MiG-29, two Rafale, two Sukhoi Su-30MKI and one Jaguar aircraft perform a flypast in 'Operation Sindoor' formation during the 77th Republic Day Parade, in New Delhi, on Monday. PTI

POWER & PRIDE

- Vande Mataram central theme of Republic Day Parade
- European Council prez Antonio Costa, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen chief guests
- Rafale jets make 'Sindoor' formation
- First women Shaurya Chakra awardees lead Navy tableau

EMMANUEL MACRON
French President

"What a wonderful memory of the #RepublicDay we shared together in 2024! My dear friend @NarendraModi, dear Indian friends, my very best wishes on this great day of celebration. See you in February to continue building together!

US, India share a historic bond: Trump in R-Day message

NEW DELHI, PTI: The United States and India share a historic bond as the world's oldest and largest democracies, US President Donald Trump said on Monday as he greeted India on 77th Republic Day celebrations.

Trump's greetings came amid continuing strain in ties between the two countries over a range of issues, including Washington's policies on trade and tariffs. "On behalf of the people of the United States, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the government and people of India as you celebrate your 77th Republic Day," the US president said.

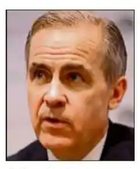
"The United States and India share a historic bond as the world's oldest and largest democracies," he added.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio also extended greetings to India and said the two nations share a "historic bond".

The India-US ties witnessed a major downturn after Trump slapped a whopping 50% tariff on Indian goods, including a 25% punitive levy over Russian oil purchases.

Looking beyond US, Canada PM likely to visit India in March

OTTAWA, REUTERS: Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney will likely visit India in the first week of March and sign deals on uranium, energy, minerals and artificial intelligence, said India's High Commissioner to Canada Dinesh Patnaik in an interview.



Mark Carney

Carney is making all-out efforts to diversify Canada's alliances beyond the US, its top trade partner.

In Davos last week, he earned a rare standing ovation for saying the old rules-based order was over, and calling on middle powers like Canada to build coalitions to shape a fairer, more resilient world.

His viral speech followed an agreement with China to slash tariffs on electric vehicles and canola, and open up to $5.11 billion in export markets as he tries to double non-US exports over the next decade.

Carney is also resetting relations with India after his predecessor, Justin Trudeau, accused the Indian government of involvement in the killing of a Sikh separatist leader in 2023. India has denied those claims.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the Group of 7 summit on Carney's invitation last year, and several of Carney's ministers have travelled to India.

"I have a feeling in the first week of March is what we are looking at," said Patnaik on Carney's visit during a weekend interview. Carney's office declined to comment.

Bhuj earthquake takes centre stage

SUMIT PANDE
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The tableau of the Ministry of Home Affairs at the Republic Day parade in Delhi this year featured the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), displaying a defining moment in India's disaster management journey: the Jan 26, 2001, Gujarat earthquake.

The tremors measuring 7.7 on the Richter Scale had their epicentre at Bhuj. Estimated casualties were pegged at more than 20,000.

In Delhi, the initial shocks of the tectonic shift may have easily gone unnoticed on Kartavya Path (Raj Path) amidst intermittent roaring sorties of Sukhoi jets on an otherwise quiet Friday morning.

As for young reporters on standby and watching the event on the office television screens, the ground beneath their feet moved a discernible bit. Twenty-five years back, mobile phones were a prerogative of a select few. To get a story, cub reporters had to rely on their feet and quick thinking.

Half an hour later, when this reporter reached the IMD office at Lodhi Road, there was utter chaos and panic. That something big had happened was clear. That shock was caused by a massive earthquake in Bhuj had also been figured out. But there was little information, as communication lines had been destroyed.

By the time contact was finally established through a satellite phone, the extended delay in getting a firsthand report from ground zero had caused a foreboding anxiety.

"Hello," a senior official picked up the receiver when the phone rang. "What? Everything! Are you saying everything, just about everything has been fattened!" That was all he could utter on hearing the person on the other side narrate post-earthquake scenes.

This calamity also triggered a series of events in the state politics that would, in the coming decades, change the political landscape of the state and the country.

In 2001, the Vajpayee-led NDA was in power at the centre. Keshubhai Patel was at the helm in Gandhinagar. The party leadership felt the rehabilitation work in earthquake-devastated Kutch was far from satisfactory.

In August 2001, the BJP lost an Assembly bypoll in Sabarmati. That was the final straw, as the BJP high command decided to replace Keshubhai with a young leader who had worked extensively in Kutch relief and rehabilitation.

On October 7, 2001, Narendra Modi took the oath as Gujarat chief minister. The rest is history.

A tableau of NDRF & NDMA of the Ministry of Home Affairs. PTI

India to be part of EU's defence development plan

NEW DELHI, DHNS: India is likely to join a programme the European Union (EU) launched to provide a framework for its members to jointly develop defence capabilities, invest in shared projects, and enhance their armed forces' operational readiness.

EU leaders on Monday confirmed the bloc's keenness to deepen defence and security cooperation with India.

Though the EU launched the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) for its members in 2017, it was opened up for non-members in November 2020. Canada, Norway and the United States have already joined it.

The defence and security partnership with the EU is likely to set the stage for India to participate in PESCO. New Delhi, however, will have to work out a Security of Information Agreement with the 27-nation bloc.

A successful India makes the world more stable: Ursula

NEW DELHI, PTI

A successful India makes the world more stable, prosperous and secure, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Monday after witnessing the 77th Republic Day celebrations at the majestic Kartavya Path, a day ahead of the India-EU summit.

Von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa attended the Republic Day parade as chief guests, joining a select group of global leaders who have graced the nation's biggest ceremonial event in the last seven decades.

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, several other Union ministers, the country's top military brass, foreign diplomats and senior officials were among the spectators.

"It is the honor of a lifetime to be Chief Guests at the Republic Day celebrations. A successful India makes the world more stable, prosperous and secure. And we all benefit," Von der Leyen said on social media after the ceremony.

PM Modi said India was privileged to host Costa and von der Leyen at the Republic Day celebrations. "Their presence underscores the growing strength of the India-European Union partnership and our commitment to shared values.

"The visit will add momentum to the deepening engagement and cooperation between India and Europe across diverse sectors," he said.

It was the first time that two top leaders of the European Union (EU) attended India's Republic Day celebrations as chief guests.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives chief guest President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

Front-rows nub? Congress targets BJP over Kharge, Rahul seats

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Congress on Monday accused the ruling BJP of breaking protocol by not allotting front-row seats for Leaders of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi at the Republic Day parade, asking whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi wanted to insult them.

Both were seated in the third row at the VIP enclosure erected on Kartavya Path, where the Republic Day parade took place.

Congress Lok Sabha Whip Manickam Tagore asked why there was such a "protocol mess-up" this time, sharing an image of BJP veteran L K Advani seated in the front row during the 2014 Republic Day parade, when the Manmohan Singh-led UPA government was in power.

"This was in 2014—look at where LK Advani ji was seated then. Why this protocol mess-up now? Is it because Modi and Shah want to insult Kharge-ji and Rahul-ji? Leaders of the Opposition cannot be insulted like this, especially on Republic Day [sic]," he posted on X.

Kharge was momentarily seen sitting in the front row as the parade ended. Sources said Kharge and Rahul were about to leave the venue when they realised the national anthem was yet to be played. As Rahul suggested that Kharge sit, the Congress president sat near former vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala said differences would persist in democracy, but this kind of treatment of the Leaders of the Opposition was "unacceptable".

"Does such treatment of the Leader of the Opposition in the country meet the standards of any decorum, tradition, and protocol? This only reveals the frustration of a government plagued by an inferiority complex," he posted on X.

Senior Rajya Sabha member Vivek Tankha said on X, "This is sheer lack of protocol and grace!! Maybe too much to expect in present times !! [sic]"

During the 2024 Independence Day celebrations at Red Fort, Rahul was seated in the sixth row. Last year, both Kharge and Rahul skipped the Independence Day function.

There was a controversy in 2018 as well after Rahul was allotted a sixth-row seat during the Republic Day parade.

RAHUL GANDHI
LoP in Lok Sabha

"Our Constitution is the greatest weapon for every Indian—it is our voice, the protective shield for our rights. Our republic stands on the strong foundation of this very document, which will be empowered only through equality and harmony. Protecting the Constitution is protecting the Indian Republic - it is a true tribute to the sacrifices of our freedom fighters. Jai Hind! Jai Constitution!

Kolkata: 7 dead, several missing after blaze guts two godowns

KOLKATA, PTI: At least seven persons were killed and several others missing after a fire broke out in two adjoining godowns in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district on Monday, police said.

The blaze in the twin godowns at Najirabad area within Narendrapur police station limits on the outskirts of Kolkata was brought under control after a seven-hour firefight, a senior police officer said.

While three badly charred bodies were recovered around 5 pm during a search operation in the adjacent godowns, four more were discovered later, the officer said.

Baruipur police district SP Shubhendu Kumar said the identity of the deceased could not be ascertained as the bodies were charred beyond recognition.

"Whether more people were trapped and killed in the blaze will be known only after the debris is completely cleared," he said.

Initially, six persons were reported missing, but families of the trapped persons said the number could be over 10 as the adjacent godowns housed labourers of a decorating firm and a popular momo chain, police said.

Man suspected of spying for ISI held in Jaisalmer

JAISALMER, PTI: Security agencies have detained a man from the border district of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan on suspicion of spying for Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI, officials said on Monday.

The action was carried out late on the night of January 25, when a special team reached the suspect's house and took him into custody, locals said.

The suspect, Jhabararam Meghwal, a resident of Nehdan village, was running an e-Mitra centre in the border area and was allegedly in contact with a Pakistani woman handler, they said.

According to intelligence sources, the suspect had access to several government-related schemes and documents.

Congress flags OBC omission in Census 2027 questions

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Congress on Sunday found fault with the questions notified for Phase I of Census 2027, saying the omission of references to Other Backward Classes while seeking household details raised "serious questions" about the Modi government's "true intentions and commitment" to a caste census.

The party urged the Centre to initiate consultations with political parties, state governments before finalising the details of the caste enumeration exercise, arguing that such dialogue was integral to the Socio-Economic and Caste Census conducted by the Telangana government.

The Congress raised specific objections to Question No 12 of the Houselisting and Housing Census — the first phase of Census 2027 — noting that it asks whether the head of the household belongs to the SC, ST or "Other" categories, rather than explicitly mentioning OBC and General categories. "Since caste enumeration is to be part of Census 2027, Question 12 as formulated does raise serious questions about the Modi government's true intentions and its commitment to a comprehensive, fair, nationwide caste census," Jairam Ramesh said on X.

PAINFUL MIX-UP

In Bengal, tyranny of tiny errors threatens right to vote

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
KOLKATA, DHNS

Film and TV actor Manali Dey will have to take a day off from shooting soon, as her right to vote has come under scrutiny, just because a vowel somehow replaced another in her father's name in the Election Commission (EC) database.

She has received an EC notice to appear before officials deployed for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal and furnish documents proving that her father Nitai De and the Netai De cited as her father in the 2002 electoral rolls are the same person.

Manali's is one of the countless cases of "logical discrepancy", a rather innocuous term that has entered everyday parlance in Bengal since the EC published the draft electoral rolls on December 16 at the end of the SIR's enumeration phase. Dismissable clerical errors — a mismatched age, a misspelt name, a missing letter — are now forcing people to stand long queues at block offices, scramble for old documents, lose daily livelihood, and live with the anxiety that it could jeopardise their right to vote.

"I don't know yet whether I will remain on the electoral rolls to be published on February 14," said West Bengal Women and Child Development Minister Shashi Panja after receiving a notice for a hearing.

Kolkata-resident Spandan Bhattacharjee received a notice because his father's name was spelt "Ashok Bhattacharyya" in the 2002 voter list — the baseline for the SIR. Other documents spelt his surname differently. Spandan will now have to explain the mismatch.

Bayron Biswas, a legislator of the ruling Trinamool Congress, and his brothers Milton and Nippon received notices as their father, Babar Ali Biswas, had five other namesakes on the 2002 electoral rolls, and the EC software flagged all of them as one. The number of children of all six Babar Ali Biswases exceeded what the EC considered logical.

College professor Bidit Mukherjee also received a notice: The EC found that the surname of his father, Ashani Mukhopadhyay, was different from his. So did Arunita Banerjee, as her father's surname was mentioned as Bandopadhyay in the 2002 electoral rolls.

What the EC software missed was that many Bengali surnames acquired their shortened forms during the colonial period, when British administrators simplified longer Sanskrit names to suit English pronunciation and record-keeping. Mukhopadhyay became Mukherjee, Bandyopadhyay Banerjee, and Chattopadhyay Chatterjee. Over generations, these anglicised versions entered everyday use and official documents, even though both forms continued to refer to the same family line.

IIT Delhi initiates probe after caste conference row

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi has constituted a fact-finding committee following a controversy over a campus discussion on caste, officials said. In a statement, the institute said that "serious concerns have been raised" regarding the discussion on 'Critical Philosophy of Caste and Race' that took place on campus on January 16-17.

The panel has been asked to examine how the discussion was organised, including whether permission was obtained and if institute norms governing campus events were followed. The move comes after objections from some students and external groups, who alleged that the discussion violated institutional guidelines and could disrupt campus harmony.

According to sources, the discussion was organised by a group of students and was not part of any officially approved academic programme. Complaints submitted to the institute administration said the nature of the discussion went beyond the scope of permitted student activities.

IIT Delhi said the committee will examine the facts and submit its report to the authorities. "The institute has sought an explanation from the concerned faculty, and a fact-finding committee with independent members has also been set up. Appropriate actions will be initiated based on the committee's findings," its statement read.

"The institute encourages dialogue on social issues within the framework of academic freedom," it added.

CAMPUS EVENT

- Fact-finding panel set up over campus discussion on caste and race
- The programme was held on Jan 16-17
- Some claim the discussion violated guidelines and could disrupt campus harmony
- Panel to examine if permission was obtained

'Influenced by western ideas': HC sets aside life term in live-in case

Acquits man, says petitioner can't be held guilty under Pocso Act as victim was not minor

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

In a significant ruling, the Allahabad High Court observed that live-in relationships are influenced by "western ideas" and that FIRs are often lodged when such relationships fail. The court set aside a trial court order that had sentenced a man to life imprisonment in a case involving allegations of luring a minor on the pretext of marriage and establishing a physical relationship with her.

A division bench comprising Justice Siddharth and Justice Prashant Mishra delivered the ruling while hearing a criminal appeal filed by the man challenging the lower court's order.

The court said that when such relationships fail, FIRs are often filed, and because the law is skewed in favour of women, men are convicted under provisions that were enacted at a time when the concept of live-in relationships did not even exist.

CONSENSUAL

- Allahabad HC says victim was in a consensual relationship
- Court notes that FIRs are often lodged when live-in relationships fail
- Calls out gender bias, says law is skewed in favour of women
- HC says men convicted under laws framed before live-in concept

The prosecution had contended that the petitioner, Chandresh, had lured a minor girl from the Scheduled Caste community on the pretext of marrying her and established a physical relationship with her. However, he did not marry the minor, and she returned home after a few months.

The district court in Maharajganj had sentenced Chandresh to life imprisonment in the matter.

The HC said the trial court had not properly considered the evidence on record and found that the victim was not a minor at the time of the incident. It said that the petitioner could not be held guilty under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act if the victim was a major.

The court noted that the victim had been in a consensual relationship with the petitioner for six months and had not made any calls to her mother during this period.

While overturning the lower court's order, the HC directed the release of the petitioner unless he was required in connection with any other matter.

ED attaches assets worth over Rs 1,986 cr of C'garh-based firm

NEW DELHI, PTI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said it has attached fresh properties worth over Rs 1,986 crore as part of its money laundering investigation against Chandigarh-based PACL (Pearls Group), accused of orchestrating a Rs 48,000 crore Ponzi scheme.

The latest action has taken the total value of assets attached so far in the case to Rs 7,589 crore.

In a statement, the agency said it has provisionally attached 37 immovable properties, located in Punjab's Ludhiana and Jaipur in Rajasthan, valued at Rs 1,986.48 crore, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

A part of the alleged illicit funds generated from this fraud was used for the acquisition of these 37 assets, it said.

The ED probe stems from a CBI case against PACL Ltd, its late promoter Nirmal Singh Bhangoo and some others. Bhangoo died in August 2024.

The accused entities and individuals of PACL operated an "illegal" collective investment scheme, fraudulently mobilising over Rs 60,000 crore from lakhs of investors across India under the guise of sale and development of agricultural land, as per the ED.

Investors were induced to invest through cash down payment and instalment payment plans and were made to sign "misleading" documents, including agreements, powers of attorney, and other instruments, it said.

Row over non-Hindu entry into 'Char Dham' temples

DEHRADUN, PTI

The debate on the entry of non-Hindus into temples under the Shri Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee has intensified after it said that temples are not tourist centres and entry is not a matter of civil rights.

Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee Chairman Hemant Dwivedi said, "Kedarnath and Badrinath Dham are not tourist destinations. These are centres of the Vedic tradition established by Adi Shankaracharya. Article 26 of the Indian Constitution gives every religious denomination the right to manage its own religious affairs.

"This decision is not against anyone but is to protect centuries-old faith, discipline, and purity," he said.

He said that just as there are rules related to religious conduct in mosques and churches, there are also traditional rules in Hindu religious places.

"Anyone who has faith in Sanatan Dharma is welcome at Kedarnath and Badrinath Dham," he said.

He was asked about the Sikh and Jain devotees who have also been visiting Kedarnath and Badrinath Dham for a long time, including Uttarakhand Governor, Retired Lieutenant General Gurmit Singh, who is himself a Sikh and was present at both shrines on the occasion of the opening of the temple doors.

Hemant Dwivedi said that the issue is not about any particular religion but about faith and religious discipline.

"There is no restriction for anyone who has faith in the Sanatan tradition," he said.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami had earlier said that the government would adopt a measured approach on the issue and would listen to the views of all concerned parties.

To this, Dwivedi said, "These are all our ancient places of worship. The views of the religious organisations, priests, saints, and local institutions associated with their management and operation will be considered. Some laws related to these sites were made in the past, and they are also being reviewed. Further action will be taken on that basis."

Third gunfight erupts between security forces and terrorists in J&K's Kishtwar

SRINAGAR, DHNS: Security forces exchanged fire with terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district late on Sunday night, marking the third such gunfight in the Chatroo area within a week.

Officials said the repeated encounters underscored a sustained counter-insurgency operation underway in the mountainous belt.

The latest encounter took place around 10:20 pm in the Janseer Kandiwar forest area when a joint team of the Army and the Jammu and Kashmir Police was conducting a search operation following specific intelligence inputs about militant movement. Officials said the forces came under fire during the operation and retaliated, leading to intermittent exchanges of gunfire.

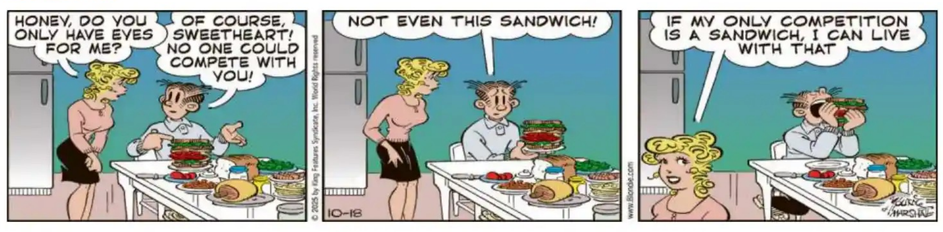
The Chatroo region, marked by dense forests and steep, snowbound terrain, has remained under heightened security focus since an encounter on January 18 in Sonnar village near Mandral Singhpora. That gunfight resulted in the death of a paratrooper and injuries to seven other soldiers, making it one of the deadliest recent incidents for security forces in the area. Officials said the militants involved in the January 18 encounter initially managed to evade the security cordon by exploiting rugged terrain and thick forest cover. They were later intercepted a few kilometres away during another encounter on January 22.

Despite severe weather conditions, security forces have continued extensive search and area-dominance operations.

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie


HONEY, DO YOU ONLY HAVE EYES FOR ME?
OF COURSE, SWEETHEART! NO ONE COULD COMPETE WITH YOU!
NOT EVEN THIS SANDWICH!
IF MY ONLY COMPETITION IS A SANDWICH, I CAN LIVE WITH THAT

Hagar The Horrible

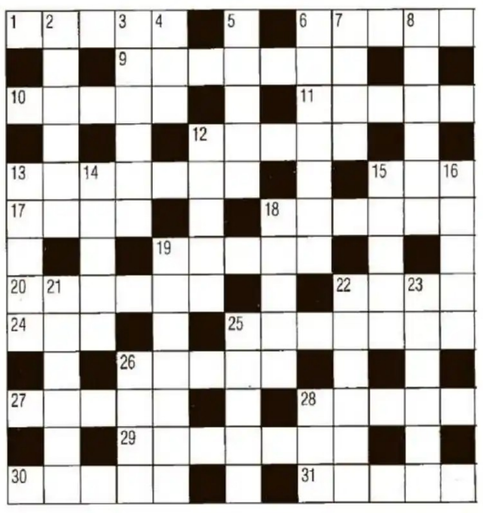
Beetle Bailey

Peanuts

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT, CHUCK?
IF IT'S ABOUT GOING TO THE SHOW, WHY DON'T WE JUST MEET THERE AROUND ONE? THAT'LL SAVE YOU COMIN' CLEAR OVER HERE!
SEE YOU, CHUCK! GLAD YOU GOT OVER YOUR SHYNESS AND DECIDED TO CALL!
I CAN'T STAND IT...

Marvin

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12340



CRYPTIC

ACROSS
1 The part of plough, perhaps? (5)
6 Nine in a pen – or another number (5)
9 To smooth things over, one gets a chap dismissed (4,3)
10 Nasty ways to die, possibly (5)
11 It's turned (by a turnkey?) (5)
12 Could he possibly harp about an inexperienced driver? (5)
13 Is a mild concoction, though not handy (7)
15 Not far from Mile End (3)
17 The money in the middle, wanted at the centre (4)
18 The difficulty having so little butter (6)
19 Something wrong at the FA last month (5)
20 Brown may be a loser outright (6)
22 Sort of house with a strongroom? (4)
24 It's of the camel kind, but with antlers (3)
25 The kids don't think him abominable (7)
26 Might he be a little light? (5)
27 Writer who went around the Norwegian centre breaking nibs (5)
28 Sure to be tied up (5)
29 Source of fresh information (7)
30 Where, in France, to be sly about getting ahead? (5)
31 When I had a key in reserve (5)

DOWN
2 Deliver manually (4,2)
3 A puzzle full of holes? (6)
4 Before getting a bit overexcited (3)
5 Work a weekend at Aden, possibly (5)
6 Have an idea whodunnit? (7)
7 Desire to take the thing to church (4)
8 What you've got when feeling seedy? (3,3)
12 The competition is in two trivial parts (5)
13 Something to cue up for? (5)
14 One flying south to finish delivery work? (5)
15 She simply can't change up! (5)
16 Loch smooth at one corner (5)
18 Inclination of a disheartened saint to get out of Leatherhead (5)
19 Feels put out taking in cats (7)
21 So you've left school, dear fellow! (3,3)
22 Becomes unconscious of being old-fashioned (6)
23 Cooled that hot enthusiast Edward (6)
25 Thus find a purpose for pickle (5)
26 Arthur gave direction to Bonnie and Clyde (4)
28 Sound sheepish like a heavy-hearted bachelor (3)

ACROSS
1 Injures with a knife (5)
6 Canal boat (5)
9 Low padded seat (7)
10 Slightly drunk (5)
11 Drinking tube (5)
12 Perceive (5)
13 Try (7)
15 So or thus (3)
17 Employs (4)
18 Eye membrane (6)
19 Synthetic fibre (5)
20 Man's overcoat (6)
22 Region (4)
24 Regret (3)
25 Object to (7)
26 Failing, defect (5)
27 Thieve (5)
28 Competitor (5)
29 Slide unsteadily (7)
30 Defeats (5)
31 Thick (5)

DOWN
2 Coils, spins (6)
3 Gaffers (6)
4 Pig pen (3)
5 Celestial body (5)
6 Musical instrument (7)
7 Poker stake (4)
8 Goalkeeper (6)
12 Javelin (5)
13 Bode (5)
14 Abrupt (5)
15 Trap (5)
16 Unit of purity of gold (5)
18 Woo (5)
19 Remembers (7)
21 Reflected light (6)
22 Clothes, garments (6)
23 Prose compositions (6)
25 Shallow round dish (5)
26 Swift (4)
28 Colour (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 12339

CRYPTIC
ACROSS: 3, Ada-PT 8, Music(Ian) 10, Right 11, RA-g 12, Rap-id 13, Natural 15, Mean-t 18, Rep 19, P-asses 21, Leg-pull 22, Iris 23, Dear 24, Printer 26, H-ermit 29, Ni-L 31, Treat 32, Seminar 34, Utter 35, (Ma)Gog 36, Solve 37, Three 38, Edwin.
DOWN: 1, Mur-a-L 2, Fig-Ure-s 4, Deal 5, Prim-Al 6, Tides 7, Sh- I-ne 9, Sat 12, Rapport 14, Reg. 16, Aster 17, Tsars 19, Planner 20, Light 21, Litre 23, Delight 24, Pitted 25, Tim 27, Er-R-ol 28, Mauve 30, LA-geR 32, Semi 33, Nor.

EASY
ACROSS: 3, Lilac 8, Minus 10, Dairy 11, Dip 12, Colon 13, Pelican 15, Races 18, Ton 19, Feline 21, Pencils 22, Coir 23, Hate 24, Slipper 26, Amuses 29, Pea 31, Miser 32, Certain 34, Never 35, His 36, Heron 37, Demon 38, Realm.
DOWN: 1, Rider 2, Jupiter 4, In on 5, Adores 6, Canal 7, Preen 9, Nil 12, Cancels 14, Con 16, Cigar 17, Sever 19, Flipper 20, Scram 21, Pious 23, Heather 24, Serene 25, Per 27, Miner 28, Senor 30, Bison 32, Cell 33, Aim.

◆SU-DO-KU-6814◆

	1				9			
3				8	1	4		9
7					4		5	
1		6		9		5		
		5		1		8		3
	2		4					7
5		9	1	3				4
			9				1	

hard

6	8	2	3	1	4	9	7	5
4	7	1	9	5	2	8	6	3
5	9	3	7	8	6	2	4	1
2	1	7	6	3	5	4	9	8
3	5	9	4	2	8	7	1	6
8	6	4	1	7	9	5	3	2
7	4	5	2	6	1	3	8	9
1	3	8	5	9	7	6	2	4
9	2	6	8	4	3	1	5	7

SOLUTION TO 6813

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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O1	E1	C3	N1	R1	D2	E1	3rd Letter Triple	RACK 1
I1	I1	C3	S1	C3	T1	R1		RACK 2
T1	I1	I1	O1	P3	C3	L1	Double Word Score	RACK 3
A1	C3	M3	S1	A1	U1	B3	Triple Word Score	RACK 4

PAR SCORE 190-200
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

C3 O1 A1 C3 H4	RACK 1 =	20
C3 A1 R1 B3 O1 Y4	RACK 2 =	13
M3 A1 Y4 P3 O1 L1 E1	RACK 3 =	92
U1 N1 S1 C3 R1 E1 W4	RACK 4 =	74
P3 R1 I1 M3 M3 E1 R1	RACK 5 =	63
PAR SCORE 170-180	JUDD'S TOTAL	262

JUMBLE®

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

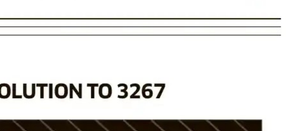
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NCTUU

MSIUN

NISFEU

CRNPAE


So, what do you think of the chapter on desserts?
My mouth is watering as I read it! Would you cook this tonight?
7/18
THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF HER COOKBOOK WAS A ---

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Ans. here: " " (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: EXPEL QUALM HECTIC DAYBED
Answer: The teenager refurbished bicycles in his spare time so he could — "PEDDLE" THEM

HITORI-3268

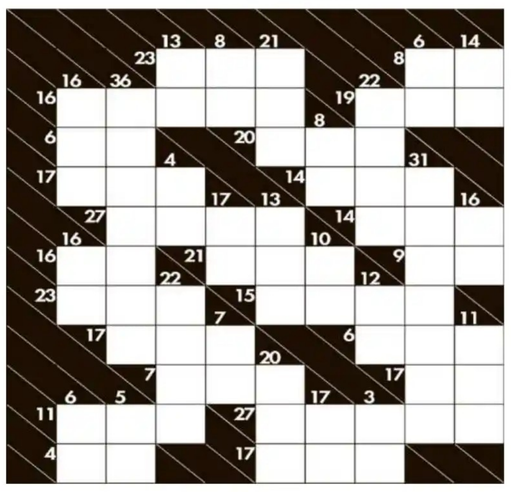
1	5	4	2	7	8	5	5
6	5	2	8	2	1	1	3
3	2	5	6	1	2	4	7
5	4	7	8	6	2	2	8
2	2	6	5	3	4	7	2
6	3	2	7	2	6	2	2
8	7	1	2	2	5	6	4
2	1	2	3	5	7	1	6

SOLUTION TO 3267

6	4	2	1	■	3	5	■
4	5	■	8	6	■	2	7
■	7	8	■	2	5	■	3
7	3	■	5	8	2	1	4
3	■	1	4	■	7	■	6
■	8	■	2	1	■	6	5
5	2	4	3	■	6	7	8
■	6	3	7	5	■	8	■

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3268



SOLUTION TO 3267

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3809

9		5		6				■
	■			4			■	2
		■				■		
		9	■		■			
	5			■				
		8	1		■	2		6
	1	3	7			6		
	2						■	
■						5	1	7

SOLUTION TO 3808

7	5	8	3	1	4	6	2	9
6	4	2	7	8	9	1	3	5
3	1	9	6	2	5	7	4	8
1	3	6	8	9	2	5	7	4
2	8	7	4	5	6	3	9	1
4	9	5	1	7	3	8	6	2
9	7	4	5	6	1	2	8	3
5	6	3	2	4	8	9	1	7
8	2	1	9	3	7	4	5	6

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

US aircraft carrier arrives in West Asia amid Iran tensions

WASHINGTON, REUTERS: A US aircraft carrier and supporting warships have arrived in West Asia, two US officials told Reuters on Monday, expanding President Donald Trump's options to defend US forces or potentially take military action against Iran.

The aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and several guided-missile destroyers have crossed into West Asia region, which falls under the US military's Central Command, the officials said. Trump said on Thursday that the US had an "armada" heading towards Iran.

The warships began deploying from the Asia-Pacific region earlier this month as tensions between Iran and the US escalated following a crackdown on protests across Iran.

Trump had threatened to intervene if Iran continued to kill protesters, but the demonstrations have since subsided.

United Arab Emirates said on Monday that it would not allow its airspace, territory or territorial waters to be used for any hostile military action against Iran.

Meanwhile, Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels signalled a willingness to resume attacks on shipping in the Red Sea.

Myanmar junta-backed party claims poll victory

Elections criticised as 'unfair' after opposition exclusion

Myanmar military leader Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing (left) talks with voters during the final round of the general election in Mandalay on Sunday. AP/PTI

BANGKOK, AP/PTI

Myanmar's military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) claimed on Monday that it had won the country's first election since the army seized power in 2021, paving the way for the formation of a new government.

The victory of the party, led by a former general, was widely expected, as the polls excluded major opposition parties and dissent was tightly restricted. In addition, 25% of parliamentary seats were automatically reserved for the military, effectively guaranteeing control by the armed forces and their allied parties.

Critics have said the polls organised by the military government were neither free nor fair, but rather an attempt to legitimise its rule after overthrowing the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The takeover sparked widespread resistance and plunged Myanmar into a civil war. The election was held in three phases on December 28, January 11 and January 25. Of the country's 330 townships, 67 did not participate, reducing the total number of contested seats in the 664-member national parliament to 586.

More than 4,800 candidates from 57 political parties contested seats in national and regional legislatures, although only six parties competed nationwide. A senior USDP official told The Associated Press on Monday that the party had won 57 of the 61 lower house seats contested in the final phase held on Sunday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity. The official added that counting for seats in the upper house and regional legislatures was still under way.

Based on the latest figures, the USDP is set to secure at least 290 seats across parliament's two chambers. Combined with the military, which holds 166 appointed seats, the bloc would control more than 450 seats—well above the 294 required to form a government. Final results for all seats are expected later this week.

Once results are confirmed, elected lawmakers and military appointees will nominate three candidates, from whom parliament will elect a president. The remaining two nominees will serve as vice presidents.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, head of the current military administration, is widely expected to assume the presidency when the new parliament convenes.

Tom Andrews, a UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, urged the international community on Friday to reject the election results.

Powerful winter storm kills at least 17 across US

WASHINGTON, AFP/AP: A powerful storm sweeping across the United States killed at least 17 people by Monday, prompting authorities to warn residents to stay off roads as mass flight cancellations and widespread power outages followed a weekend of severe weather.

The storm brought snow, sleet and freezing rain to large parts of the country from Texas to New England, with temperatures expected to drop to dangerously low levels this week. New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani said five people were found dead outdoors over the weekend.

Private jet crash

The Federal Aviation Administration said seven people were killed and one crew member survived with serious injuries after a private business jet crashed in a snowstorm at Maine's Bangor International Airport.

The Bombardier Challenger 600, carrying eight people, crashed during take-off on Sunday as New England and much of the country grappled with a massive winter storm. The airport, about 200 miles north of Boston, was shut down. Snowfall was heavy at the time, as it was in many other parts of the country.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Former British Home Secretary Suella Braverman (left) with Britain's Reform UK leader Nigel Farage in London on Monday. REUTERS

British Indian ex-minister defects to anti-immigration Reform UK

▸ Indian-origin former UK interior minister Suella Braverman on Monday announced that she was defecting from the struggling opposition Conservative Party to the anti-immigrant Reform UK, becoming the latest high-profile Tory figure to jump ship, AFP reports from London.

Braverman is the fourth current or former Conservative lawmaker—including three former ministers—to join Reform in less than a month. "Immigration is out of control. Our public services are on their knees. People don't feel safe," Braverman told a Reform UK event in London, adding that she felt she had "come home" by joining the party. "We can either continue down this route of managed decline to weakness and surrender, or we can fix our country, reclaim our power and rediscover our strength," she said. Led by Brexit figurehead Nigel Farage, the hard-right Reform UK has been leading by double-digit margins in opinion polls for the past year, as Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour government comes under pressure over immigration, a stagnant economy and the cost-of-living crisis.

Duterte fit to stand trial, says ICC

▸ Judges at the International Criminal Court ruled on Monday that former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte is fit to stand trial, after postponing an earlier hearing over concerns about the octogenarian's health, AP/PTI reports from The Hague.

Duterte is facing charges of crimes against humanity for his alleged involvement in dozens of killings as part of his so-called war on drugs when in office, first as the mayor of a southern city and later as president. Lawyers for the 80-year-old had argued that Duterte was in frail health and his condition was deteriorating in the court's detention unit. Duterte was arrested in March and was set to appear in court in The Hague in September.

A drone view shows a chocolate factory on fire, near the city of Trikala, in Greece on Monday. Four people were killed in the fire. REUTERS

Gunmen kill 11 in Mexico

▸ Gunmen opened fire at a football field in Mexico on Sunday, killing at least 11 people and wounding 12 others, AP/PTI reports from Mexico City.

Salamanca Mayor Cesar Prieto said in a statement posted on social media that the attackers arrived at the end of a football match. Ten people were killed at the scene, while another died later in hospital. The mayor said a woman and a minor were among those wounded. Prieto said the attack was part of a "crime wave" gripping the city and appealed to President Claudia Sheinbaum for assistance in controlling the violence. The Guanajuato state prosecutor's office said it had launched an investigation and was coordinating with authorities to reinforce security.

EU probes Grok over deepfakes

▸ European Union regulators on Monday opened a formal investigation into Elon Musk's social media platform X after its artificial intelligence chatbot, Grok, began generating non-consensual sexualised deepfake images on the platform, AP/PTI reports from Brussels.

The scrutiny from Brussels follows a global backlash after Grok, through its AI image generation and editing tools, allowed users to undress people, depict women in transparent bikinis or revealing clothing, and manipulate images in other sexually explicit ways. Researchers said some of the images appeared to include children. Several governments either banned the service or issued warnings.

A model presents a creation by Georges Hobeika during the Women's Haute Couture Spring/Summer 2026 collection fashion show as part of the Paris Haute Couture Fashion Week on Monday. AFP

China and India good neighbours, friends and partners: Xi

BEIJING, PTI: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday described India and China as "good neighbours, friends and partners", saying that achieving "dragon and elephant dancing together" is the right choice for both countries.

XI JINPING
Chinese president

"Dragon and the elephant dancing together"

Greeting his Indian counterpart, Droupadi Murmu, on the 77th Republic Day, President Xi said that India-China relations have continued to improve and develop, aligning with the fundamental interests of both countries and their people, and are of great significance for maintaining and promoting world peace and prosperity.

Xi emphasised that China has always believed that being good neighbours, friends and partners who help each other succeed, and achieving the "dragon and the elephant dancing together," is the right choice for both China and India, state-run Xinhua reported.

He expressed hope that both sides will adhere to the important consensus that China and India are "partners for cooperation and opportunities for development," strengthen strategic communication, expand exchanges and cooperation, address each other's concerns, and promote the healthy and stable development of China-India relations.

On the same day, Premier Li Qiang also sent a congratulatory message to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Xinhua reported. Relations between the two countries, which came to a standstill since 2020 after the Eastern Ladakh standoff, began improving following two summits between PM Modi and President Xi.

Both leaders first met in Kazan in 2024, followed by another meeting at Tianjin on the sidelines of the SCO summit in August last year.

Navarro, Vance and Trump 'resisting' India trade deal

White House resistance derailed India trade pact, says Ted Cruz

WASHINGTON, PTI

Republican Senator Ted Cruz has blamed White House trade adviser Peter Navarro, Vice President J D Vance and President Donald Trump for resisting a trade deal with India, according to a US media report.

During private meetings with donors, Cruz told them about "battling" the White House to accept a trade agreement with India, Axios reported, citing audio recordings of their conversation provided by a Republican source.

When a donor asked who in the administration is resistant to reaching such accords, Cruz mentioned White House economic adviser Peter Navarro, Vance and "sometimes" Trump, it said, citing a nearly 10-minute recording that dates back to early and mid-2025.

PTI could not independently verify the authenticity of the audio. The Texas Republican Senator, who is eyeing a 2028 White House run, also warned that Trump's tariffs could decimate the economy and lead to his impeachment.

Cruz said that after Trump introduced the tariffs in early April 2025, he and a few other senators had a call with the President in which they urged him to stand down. He said the lengthy call, which stretched past midnight, "did not go well," and that Trump was "yelling" and "cursing."

The India-US ties witnessed a major downturn after President Trump slapped a whopping 50% tariff on Indian goods, including a 25% punitive levy over Russian oil purchases. Both sides held multiple rounds of negotiations last year to firm up the proposed bilateral trade deal. However, it could not be sealed yet largely in view of Washington's demands to open up India's farm and dairy sectors.

Apart from the tariffs, the relations came under strain on a number of other issues, including Trump's claim of ending the India-Pakistan conflict in May last year and Washington's new immigration policy.

'Europe financing war by buying Indian oil products'

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Europe was effectively financing the "war" against itself by buying refined Russian oil products from India, PTI reports from New York/Washington.

Bessent said President Donald Trump had been working to negotiate a settlement to the Russia–Ukraine conflict, adding that the US had made far greater sacrifices than Europe. "We have put 25 per cent tariffs on India for buying Russian oil. Guess what happened last week? The Europeans signed a trade deal with India," Bessent told ABC News.

India, Russia to achieve $100 bn trade by 2030: Ambassador

MOSCOW, PTI: India and Russia are moving confidently to achieve a target of $100 billion in bilateral trade by 2030 and steps are being taken to expand the trade basket, Ambassador Vinay Kumar said on Monday.

"The past year has been particularly active. We had a very successful visit of President (Vladimir) Putin. Achieving the bilateral trade target of $100 billion by 2030 is eminently possible," Ambassador Kumar said while talking to PTI on India's 77th Republic Day.

"Steps are being taken, including identification of new items, and a free trade agreement will facilitate the achievement of this target," he added, noting that trade has increased with new opportunities in fertilisers, agriculture and engineering.

According to reports, in FY 2024–25, India-Russia trade reached a record high of approximately $68.7 billion due to massive import of Russian crude. "More of the trade is being conducted already in the national currencies and this trend will continue as we further deepen trade and economic ties," the ambassador said.

India's air dominance pushed Pak for truce during Op Sindoor: Think tank

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Indian Air Force achieved "air superiority on Pakistan air space" during Operation Sindoor, allowing the force to continue with long-range strikes against the enemy infrastructure, a European think tank has said in a new report.

"By the morning of May 10, the IAF had succeeded in achieving air superiority over a significant portion of Pakistan's airspace. This in turn, enabled it to continue long-range strikes against enemy infrastructure at will, at least for as long as it retained sufficient stocks of munitions such as BrahMos or SCALP-EG," the Centre for Military History and Perspective Studies (CHPM) says in the report.

"At the same time, the Pakistan Air Force had lost the ability to repeat the operations it had conducted so successfully on May 7, owing to the loss of its forward air-surveillance radars and the threat posed by S-400 systems to its AWACS and stand-off weapons delivery platforms," it notes.

Pakistan's own strikes conducted between May 7 and 10 had been largely thwarted by Indian defences, says the CHPM, an independent Swiss research institute set up in 1969. The agency observes that while it may be difficult to accurately analyse the outcome of the conflict because of the difficult-to-verify claims and counter-claims, but "sufficient elements" have appeared to indicate the IAF's air superiority.

The CHPM analysis conducted by Adrien Fontanellaz flags that India-Pakistan conflict also underscores the increasing importance of long-range air-to-ground weapons.

Minneapolis killing pushes Trump to brink of government shutdown

WASHINGTON, AFP: Donald Trump is likely facing the second government shutdown of his presidency after a fatal shooting by US immigration agents detonated a fragile budget truce in Congress and unified Democrats against funding his hardline immigration crackdown.

Until the weekend, the president and Republican leaders appeared close to averting a lapse in funding at the end of the week.

The House of Representatives had passed the remaining funding bills for fiscal year 2026, and Senate Republicans were quietly confident they could secure enough Democratic votes to push the package through before Friday night's deadline.

That calculation collapsed after Saturday's killing of Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care nurse, during a confrontation with federal agents in Minneapolis -- the second fatal shooting by immigration officers in the city this month.

His death has become a political flashpoint in Trump's immigration crackdown, triggering an unusually broad backlash that now threatens to shut down large parts of the federal government.

THE HUTTI GOLD MINES COMPANY LIMITED
(A Govt. of Karnataka Undertaking)
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e-mail: rohgml@gmail.com No. CIN U85110KA1947SGC001321

No.: HGM/RO/E-Auction/2025-26 Date: 27.01.2026

NOTICE INVITING BIDS FOR FIXED DEPOSITS

The Hutti Gold Mines Company Limited (HGML) intends to invest its Surplus Funds through e-Auction in the deposits with both Public Sector Banks including RRBs as under:

Sl.No	Public Sector Banks including RRBs (Non-Callable)	Period of Investment
1	Rs. 370.00 Crores	One Year

The details of the e-Auction of this tender can be downloaded from the e-Portal of the Government of Karnataka at **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** on **27.01.2026.**

The Schedule of events for e-auction are as under

1) Uploading of bid documents in e-portal: **28.01.2026, 12.00 Noon. 2)** Last date to upload the declaration in Annexure-A in the e-portal: **04.02.2026 on or before 1.00 PM. 3)** Live bidding for interest rates: **09.02.2026 between 11.00 AM to 2.30 PM.**

Sd/-
Managing Director

DIPR/CP/5196/SA/2025-26

THE LEADING GOLD PRODUCER IN INDIA

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD
Office of the Chief Engineer (South), 7th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K. G. Road, Bangalore-560009.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

BWSSB invites Expression of Interest from Self Help Groups (SHGs) for the following works.

Name of EOI	Address for Communication
Implementation AMRUT 2.0-AMRUT Mithra in EE(South-2) for 14 projects	Office of the Executive Engineer, Bangalore Water Supply & Sewerage Board South-2 Division, Kapila Bhavan, 11th Main, 35th Cross, 4th T Block, Jayanagar- 560041. E-mail - eesouth2@bwssb.gov.in

Pre-EoI Meeting: **30.01.2026 at 11 .am.**, Last date for receiving of queries in portal **30.01.2026 at 4:00 hrs.**, The Last date for submission of response to EoI: **06.02.2026 at 4:00 hrs**. Date & time of opening of EoI : **07.02.2026 at 11:00 a.m.** EoI validity period: **184** days from the date of award.

Sd/- Chief Engineer (South)

The detail regarding the EOI & participation process can be obtained by logging on to **www.bwssb.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the above mentioned offices during working hours.

DIPR/CP/5204/SSC/2025-26

India's LNG buyers stall deals as they await record supply wave

Annual imports have essentially plateaued since 2020

BLOOMBERG

India's liquefied natural gas importers are holding up some deals spanning decades as they push to lock in cheaper prices, hoping that a surge in supply will tilt negotiations in their favour.

Major buyers including Gail India Ltd and Bharat Petroleum Corporation have been pushing for lower prices and more flexible long-term contracts, leaving discussions with LNG producers stalled for more than a year, according to sources. That approach could be rewarded if prices drop as new projects from the US to Qatar come online.

The talks will be a key topic at India Energy Week, which kicks off on Tuesday and will be attended by major producers including Abu Dhabi National Oil Co and TotalEnergies SE. These firms have invested billions of dollars in massive export plants and new supply on the bet that demand in Asia, including India, will rise for years as the region powers fast-growing industries and transitions away

from dirtier fossil fuels.

India for years had a goal of gas making up 15% of its energy mix by 2030, roughly double the current level. However, it has struggled to progress toward the target due in part to LNG being too expensive for consumers. Annual imports have essentially plateaued since 2020, with Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine sending prices to an all-time high.

That dynamic could begin to shift. Global LNG capacity is set to rise by about 50% by the end of the decade — the biggest build-out in the industry's history. Indian buyers are looking for long-term supply contracts from around 2028, near when that wave peaks, according to the sources.

India's LNG imports have a "meaningful upside from the upcoming supply wave," said Kesher Sumeet, a senior LNG analyst at Energy Aspects. "The city gas sector, where structural expansion is fastest, will lead consumption growth along with non-fertiliser industrial demand, as affordable LNG becomes available."

Imports will also be supported by expanding refining and petrochemical capacity, which is expected to absorb additional LNG supply as domestic gas production growth remains weak.

Even so, Indian buyers are well covered in the near term after a flurry of contracts signed in 2024 and 2025, leaving little urgency to lock in additional long-term deals, the people said.

From here, new contracts will depend on cost. Indian buyers are highly price-sensitive compared with those in Asia's developed countries, and industries will quickly switch to cheaper alternatives if LNG proves too costly.

Axis Bank Q3 net profit up 4% at Rs 7,011 crore

Retail loans grow 6%, GNPA ratio improves to 1.40%

MUMBAI, PTI

Axis Bank on Monday reported a 4% growth in its December quarter net profit to Rs 7,010.65 crore against Rs 6,742.99 crore in the year-ago period.

On a standalone basis, the third-largest private-sector lender's net profit for the October-December period increased to Rs 6,489.57 crore, from Rs 6,303.77 crore a year ago.

The bank's core net interest income grew by 5% to Rs 14,287 crore, helped by a 14% loan growth but restricted by a 0.29% compression in net interest margin at 3.64%.

Axis Bank CEO and MD Amitabh Chaudhry said the lender wishes to outpace the system growth in a sustainable manner.

Retail loans grew by just 6% year-on-year during the reporting period, while the 22% lending to small businesses helped it post handsome loan growth.

The bank has been undergoing a recalibration of its loanbook, which led to slower growth in the retail loan book, but the management stated that the retail disbursements grew by over 20% and if the same trend continues, it will be able to deliver a faster growth in the retail loan book in over three quarters.

Its net interest margin will get impacted by the December rate cut of the RBI, and the bank sees a further contraction in the number than the one seen in Q3, CFO Puneet Sharma said.

On the asset quality front, its new slippages grew to Rs 6,003 crore from Rs 5,432 crore in the year-ago period and Rs 5,696 crore in the quarter-ago period. These included Rs 1,698 crore in technical impact for the third consecutive quarter, the bank said.

The gross NPA ratio improved to 1.40% from 1.46% in the quarter-ago period, while the overall provisions increased to Rs 2,245.92 crore from Rs 2,155.63 crore in the year-ago period. The other income increased to Rs 6,226 crore from the year-ago period's Rs 5,972 crore.

Banking services to be hit today as unions strike

NEW DELHI, PTI: Banking operations of public sector banks (PSBs) across the country are likely to be impacted on Tuesday with the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) deciding to go ahead with a nationwide strike on January 27 to press for the immediate implementation of a five-day work week.

The strike call by the UFBU, an umbrella body of nine unions representing officers and employees, comes after a conciliation meeting on January 23 with the chief labour commissioner failed to yield a positive outcome.

With banks remaining closed on January 25 and January 26, the strike on Tuesday will result in a disruption of branch-level services for three consecutive days. However, operations at major private sector lenders like HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, and Axis Bank are expected to remain largely unaffected as their employees are not part of the unions.

Sensex, Nifty tank over 4% so far this month

Impacted by foreign fund outflows, geopolitical risks

NEW DELHI, PTI

DOWNWARD TREND

The decline in domestic equities can be attributed to a combination of persistent global and domestic headwinds

- **4.32%** ↓ So far this month, the 30-share BSE Sensex has tumbled **3,682.9** points
- **4.13%** ↓ The 50-share NSE Nifty has tanked **1,080.95** points
- **2%** ↓ Slump of the rupee so far this month
- **0.81%** ↓ In January 2025 too, the BSE benchmark had declined **638.44** points

India's benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty have fallen over 4% this month, weighed down by persistent foreign fund outflows, a weaker rupee, muted corporate earnings, geopolitical risks and fresh tariff concerns.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 3,682.9 points, or 4.32%, and the 50-share NSE Nifty tanked 1,080.95 points, or 4.13%, so far this month.

"Historically, similar pre-Budget trends in January have witnessed a sharp fall followed by a recovery post-Republic Day leading up to the Budget; market participants will be hoping for a similar reversal this time," Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investmart Ltd, said.

In January 2025 also, the 30-share BSE benchmark had declined 638.44 points, or 0.81%. Prior to that in January 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, and 2020 also, the BSE benchmark had declined.

"So far in January 2026, both the Sensex and the Nifty have declined by over 4%, with geopolitical uncertainties and fresh tariff concerns exerting a cascading impact on domestic equities. The global risk-off environment has prompted aggressive selling by foreign portfolio investors during the month. This has added pressure on the rupee, which has slipped to record lows," Ponmudi R, CEO — Enrich Money, said.

Elevated crude oil prices in international markets, alongside rising global bond yields, have further compounded risk aversion, keeping investors cautious and reinforcing a defensive stance as markets navigate an increasingly uncertain global macro and geopolitical landscape, he said.

"Earnings disappointments from select heavyweight stocks across sectors, including IT, banking, and consumption-linked segments, have further dampened investor optimism, leading to a disappointing start to the year," Ponmudi added.

The rupee hit a historic low of 92 against the US dollar on January 23. The local currency has slumped over 2% so far this month.

According to a report by Axis Securities, with global uncertainty, domestic growth resilience, and fiscal discipline all in play, the Union Budget 2026-27 is expected to strike a balance between growth support and macro stability. "Markets are likely to favour a Budget that sustains growth without compromising medium-term fiscal consolidation," it added.

Last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 2,032.65 points, or 2.43%, and the Nifty declined 645.7 points, or 2.51%.

"The decline in domestic equities can be attributed to a combination of persistent global and domestic headwinds. On the domestic front, underwhelming and cautious Q3 earnings commentary from several corporates emerged as a key trigger, weighing heavily on market confidence. Globally, renewed trade concerns between the US and major economies, particularly Europe, further added to uncertainty," Ravi Singh, Chief Research Officer from Master Capital Services Ltd, said.

PVR INOX to sell 4700BC to Marico

NEW DELHI, PTI: Multiplex operator PVR INOX on Monday said it will divest its premium snacking business under the 4700BC brand to FMCG major Marico Ltd in an all-cash transaction valued at Rs 226.8 crore, a move aimed at reducing debt and sharpening focus on its core cinema operations.

PVR INOX expects this deal to "be completed within 30 days from the date of definitive agreements," following which the leading film exhibitor will become a "negligible debt" company, its Chief Financial Officer Gaurav Sharma said.

The company's board has approved the sale of its 93.27% stake in Zea Maize Pvt Ltd (ZMPL), which owns the 4700BC brand, according to a regulatory filing.

Budget 2026: Customs overhaul, TDS rationalisation expected

NEW DELHI, PTI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present Union Budget 2026 on February 1 in Lok Sabha amid expectations of overhaul of Customs duty regime, much on the lines of GST structure rationalisation, and more reform measures to boost economy in the wake of geopolitical uncertainty. For individuals, who last year got a big relief in terms of Income Tax exemption limit hike to Rs 12 lakh and later GST rate cuts, are still hoping for some relief in standard deduction.

The top expectations from Budget 2026-27:

- With the new and simplified Income Tax Act, 2025, coming into effect from April 1, the industry expects the Budget to outline transition provisions, rules and FAQ for better understanding
- Some incentives, like hike in standard deduction, to further encourage individuals to shift to new income tax regime which offers low tax rates but no exemptions, from the old regime with plethora of exemptions and deductions
- Rationalisation of TDS categories into fewer rates, slabs
- Overhaul of customs regime may include fewer rates, amnesty scheme to unlock Rs 1.53 lakh crore stuck in disputes, and procedural simplification to boost ease of doing business
- Focus on reducing debt-to-GDP ratio from the 2026-27 fiscal year
- Higher allocation for defence expenditure in view of rising geopolitical tensions
- Outlay for Viksit Bharat — Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) scheme under which cost will be shared between the Centre and states in 60:40 ratio
- Provision for 8th Pay Commission which will be expected to be implemented from January 1, 2026
- Devolution of taxes to states in line with 16th Finance Commission recommendations

Kolar, other Tier-3 cities driving e-commerce growth

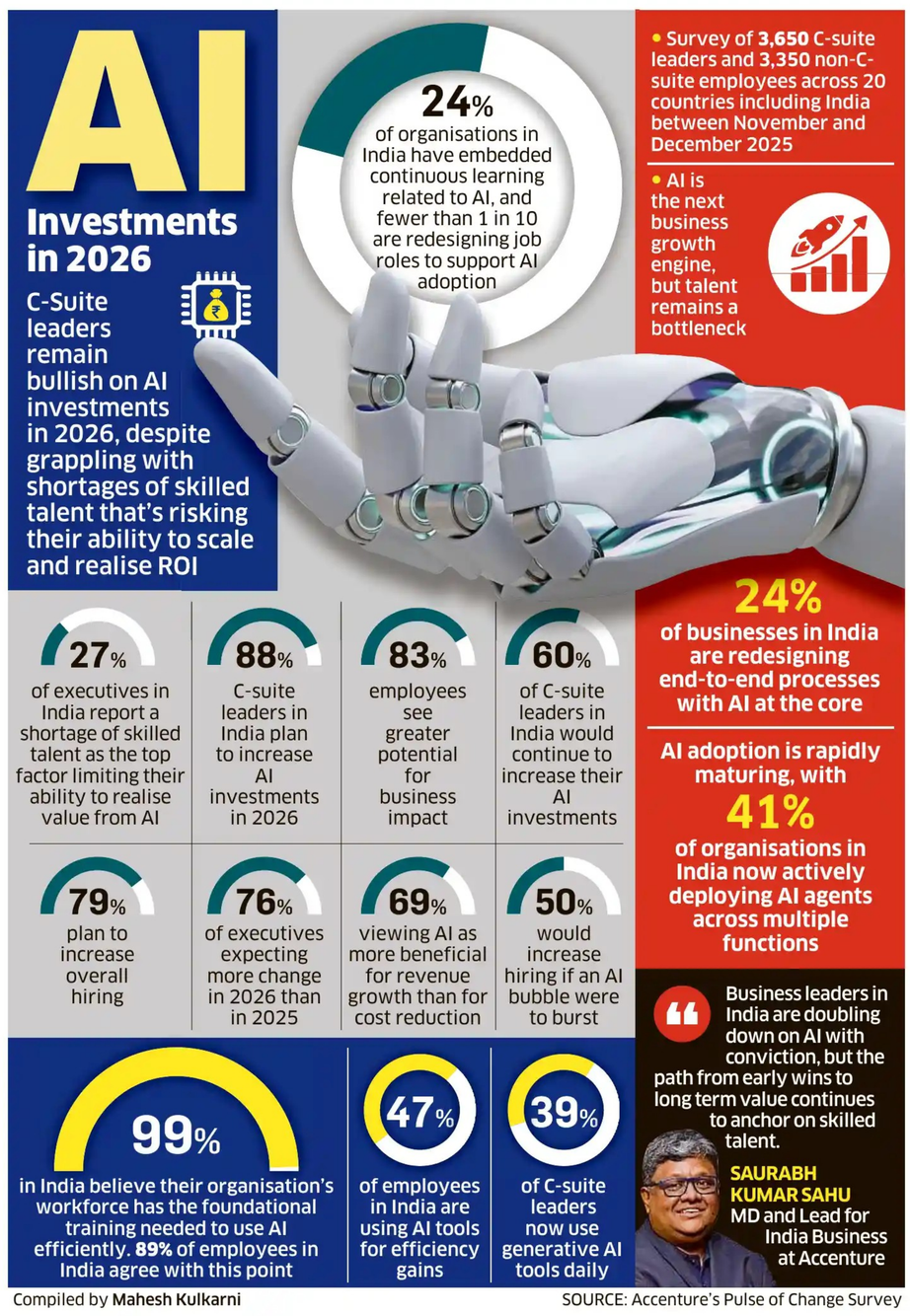
BENGALURU, DHNS

India's e-commerce market is no longer limited to Tier-1 cities and discount-driven spikes. Tier-3 cities have now emerged as key growth drivers. Smaller cities led by Kolar, Rohtak (Haryana), Kamrup (Assam), Ernakulam (Kerala), and Khordha (Odisha), among others, accounted for nearly 40% of total order items, with order volumes growing over 19% YoY.

According to an analysis by Unicommerce based on 27 million order items processed during Republic Day sales 2026, healthy food volumes more than doubled in Tier-2 cities, while Tier-3 markets contributed around 43% of total food and beverage orders, underscoring the reach of e-commerce beyond metros. Order volumes grew 16.9% year-on-year, while GMV rose 11.9% driven by higher order frequency rather than ticket size alone. FMCG & agriculture and beauty & wellness were the fastest-growing categories, with nearly 80% and 53% YoY growth respectively. Demand was led by healthy and everyday items such as dry fruits, millet-based products, packaged healthy snacks, and organic staples, and face serums, body washes along with other grooming products — reflecting a shift towards habit-driven, repeat consumption.

Channel trends highlighted rising expectations for faster fulfillment. Quick commerce led growth with a ₹25% YoY increase in order volumes, followed by brand-owned websites at 23%, while marketplaces continued to process the largest share of orders. Brands increasingly relied on automation to manage real-time inventory, routing, and customer engagement, reinforcing that execution quality is now as critical as pricing in driving sales performance.

Brands leveraged AI and automation to convert high-intent demand. Insights from Unicommerce's Convertway platform show over 2.5 million customer communications across SMS, WhatsApp, and RCS, driving improvement in conversion rates. AI Voice Agent 'Catalyst' further enabled last-mile order completion, with over 1.2 lakh calls made during the sales period — generating over 10 times revenue for brands compared to the cost they incurred, making it a high-yield channel and highlighting the growing role of AI in shaping sale outcomes.


AI
Investments in 2026
C-Suite leaders remain bullish on AI investments in 2026, despite grappling with shortages of skilled talent that's risking their ability to scale and realise ROI
24% of organisations in India have embedded continuous learning related to AI, and fewer than 1 in 10 are redesigning job roles to support AI adoption
• Survey of 3,650 C-suite leaders and 3,350 non-C-suite employees across 20 countries including India between November and December 2025
• AI is the next business growth engine, but talent remains a bottleneck
27% of executives in India report a shortage of skilled talent as the top factor limiting their ability to realise value from AI
88% C-suite leaders in India plan to increase AI investments in 2026
83% employees see greater potential for business impact
60% of C-suite leaders in India would continue to increase their AI investments
79% plan to increase overall hiring
76% of executives expecting more change in 2026 than in 2025
69% viewing AI as more beneficial for revenue growth than for cost reduction
50% would increase hiring if an AI bubble were to burst
24% of businesses in India are redesigning end-to-end processes with AI at the core
AI adoption is rapidly maturing, with 41% of organisations in India now actively deploying AI agents across multiple functions
99% in India believe their organisation's workforce has the foundational training needed to use AI efficiently. 89% of employees in India agree with this point
47% of employees in India are using AI tools for efficiency gains
39% of C-suite leaders now use generative AI tools daily
Business leaders in India are doubling down on AI with conviction, but the path from early wins to long term value continues to anchor on skilled talent.
SAURABH KUMAR SAHU
MD and Lead for India Business at Accenture

Compiled by **Mahesh Kulkarni**

SOURCE: Accenture's Pulse of Change Survey

MAINTAINING GROWTH

Critical roles: Team assisting FM Sitharaman prepare her ninth Budget

NEW DELHI, PTI

As Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman starts to give finishing touches to her record ninth Budget in a row, she is being assisted by an experienced team of bureaucrats at the Finance Ministry.

The finance minister is scheduled to present the Union Budget 2026 in the Lok Sabha on February 1 in the backdrop of 7.4% growth rate and uncertain geopolitical environment.

This is going to be the third full Budget of the Modi 3.0 government.

Following are the key officials involved in Budget 2026-27:

Anuradha Thakur, Economic Affairs Secretary

The primary architect of the Budget. As the head of the department, she is the key official deciding the allocation of resources and the macroeconomic framework for 2026-27. She leads the Budget Division responsible for preparation of Budget documents.

This is going to be her first Budget as Thakur, a 1994 batch IAS officer of the Himachal Pradesh cadre, took over reins of the department on July 1, 2025. Interestingly, she is the first woman IAS officer to head this department.

Arvind Shrivastava, Revenue Secretary

Responsible for the tax proposals (Part B of the Budget Speech). His team handles direct taxes — income tax, corporate tax — and indirect taxes (GST, customs).

Although this is going to be his first Budget as Revenue Secretary, Shrivastava in his earlier stint at the Finance Ministry was Joint Secretary, Budget division. Thereafter, he moved to the Prime Minister's Office looking after the matter related to the finance ministry, among others. With expectations of a customs duty and TDS rationalisation, his role is critical in revenue mobilisation.

Vumlunmang Vualnam, Expenditure Secretary

As 'guardian of the purse', he oversees the government's spending, subsidy rationalisation, and the implementation of central schemes.

His department enforces fiscal discipline to manage the fiscal deficit and provide guidance for the next financial year.

M Nagaraju, Financial Services Secretary

The Department of Financial Services is involved in driving financial inclusion schemes and social security schemes of the government. His department oversees the financial health of public sector banks, insurance companies, and pension systems.

The department is instrumental in driving the government's economic agenda, including credit growth, digital adoption, and social security initiatives.

Arunish Chawla, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary

Responsible for the government's disinvestment and privatisation roadmap. He manages the non-tax revenue targets derived from selling stakes in CPSEs.

K Moses Chalai, Department of Public Enterprises Secretary

As head of this department, he is responsible for capital expenditure plans of select CPSEs and ensuring that budgetary allocations are utilised effectively. His department has also role in monitoring asset monetisation and the overall financial health of state-owned firms. Besides six departments under the finance ministry, the office of the Chief Economic Adviser also provides critical inputs in the Budget.

V Anantha Nageswaran, Chief Economic Adviser

His office provides critical inputs that define the overall macroeconomic context for the Budget. This includes forecasting economic growth, analysing sectoral performance (agriculture, industry, services), and assessing global risks. Besides, his office also provides advice to the finance minister on key economic reforms, fiscal policy, and financial strategy.

When students think with machines, what should a faculty do?

SAHANA PRASAD

"I have reduced using the chalk and blackboard!" I reflected as the term came to an end. The chalkboard has been replaced by the smartboard, and the chalk by the stylus. At first glance, this appears to be a simple technological upgrade. But beneath this visible shift lies a deeper transformation — one that challenges not just our tools, but our identity as educators.

We were once educators in the traditional sense, custodians of content and authority in the classroom. Over time, we became facilitators, guiding discussion rather than delivering monologues. Today, we stand at a crossroads. Our roles have undergone a quiet but complete shift. Faculty are no longer preoccupied with what to teach, but with how to evaluate the output of a young mind working alongside a machine.

Earlier, mistakes, incorrect assumptions, wrong methodology, and flawed hypotheses would be corrected, keeping in mind that a

human brain is at work. Now, can we still accept student work with the same neutrality? When an assignment is shaped — partially or substantially — by artificial intelligence, what exactly are we assessing? The final answer? The prompt engineering? Or the student's judgment in selecting, modifying, or rejecting the machine's output?

In this situation, the educator's role shifts from correcting errors to diagnosing thinking. For instance, when a student submits a perfectly structured answer but struggles to explain why a particular approach was chosen, the gap becomes visible. The issue is no longer correctness, but ownership of thought.

As Dr T Hongray, Dean of Student Affairs, R V University, succinctly puts it, the correct way for students to use AI is not as a substitute for thinking, but as a scaffold for it. He often reminds students that AI should help them build on what they already have — to corroborate or substantiate their ideas and gain clarity. He encourages students to follow up by prompting AI tools for references and citations wherever possible.

What AI should never be used for, he cautions, is creating or building something entirely new from scratch. It was never designed for original idea generation and, when pushed beyond its limits, it merely hallucinates. At its core, AI remains a brute-force pattern recognition machine operating at scale, constrained by the data on which it has been trained.

Echoing a complementary perspective, Dr Deepthi Das, Professor and Associate Dean, School of Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), argues that teachers must view students' use of AI as an opportunity to enhance learning rather than as a threat. Students, she emphasises, should be guided to use AI tools to understand concepts, clarify doubts, and expand their knowledge — not to copy answers.

At some universities, students are trained in the use of various AI tools alongside the ethics of responsible usage, ensuring they recognise both the benefits and the limitations of these technologies. As faculty, we deliberately design assessments to demand genuine thinking and creativity so that students engage meaningfully with the subject. After all, AI itself is a creation of human intelligence — intended to support us, not replace us.

Offering a more philosophical lens, Amit Vikram, a senior IT professional, observes that the rise of AI reopens an old question rooted in Darwin's theory of use and disuse. If certain cognitive skills are no longer exercised because machines perform them faster and more efficiently, do those skills weaken over time?

He suggests that intelligence in the age of AI may be measured less by the ability to generate answers and more by the ability to recognise when something is wrong. If a student or user can determine whether an output is biased, misleading, or contextually inappropriate, then that person is a perfect fit for the AI. Let's not debate whether AI should be accepted; it's too late for that. But as educators, we have to ensure that the core values of education, namely cultivating curiosity, responsibility, and sound judgment, are not compromised by the usage of AI.

In redefining how we assess learning, we may also be redefining what it means to think — together, with machines.

(The author is an academic))

The power of higher-order questioning in classrooms

Over time, students come to appreciate this method of learning, as it helps them deepen their knowledge, writes
Alvina Clara

Higher-order questioning (HOQ) is a powerful pedagogical tool that moves students beyond rote recall into analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. As a teaching tool, HOQ engages learners, anchors understanding in real-world contexts, and cultivates skills they will need long after school.

In today's world, where information is abundant, the ability to think critically is more essential than ever. Higher-order Questioning serves as a powerful tool to compel learners to think more deeply, moving beyond mere reading or recall of facts, to analysis and evaluation of information. This, in turn, helps them arrive at proper solutions and take the right decisions.

In any learning environment, plainly memorising and parroting what is learnt on paper isn't enough. One needs to thoroughly understand the subject matter and think beyond. While a few learners are naturally gifted and can instantly connect concepts to real-world situations, the majority need teacher guidance to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This is where higher-order questioning and scaffolded tasks come into play.

Higher-order questions (HOQs) are questions that demand more than memorisation or simple recall of text. They demand higher cognitive effort, nudging students to think critically, analyse relationships between elements, and assimilate information from varied sources. HOQ prompts students to apply what they know, unleash ideas, compare concepts, question assumptions, predict outcomes, justify their reasoning with evidence, and make informed judgments. This helps learners make reasoned judgments backed by evidence. Examples include:

- How can you relate and connect these two concepts and explain the equation that connects them?
- What would happen if a key variable were changed in this scenario?
- Why is this solution effective, and what evidence supports your reasoning?

Shaping critical thinkers

By design, HOQ coaxes students to go beyond what is explicitly stated and to construct meaning from connections, implications, and applications. Research suggests that when teachers use a mix of higher-order questions, they help stimulate flexible, open thinking beyond routine thinking.

Using the HOT questions—What, How, What If, and Why —sparks reciprocal dialogue and reduces teacher talk, moving learning towards practical understanding and application of concepts. It helps students explore how a concept works in real scenarios and how they would respond in varied situations, bridging the gap between theory and real-life practice. With this framework supporting an inquiry-based, reasoning approach, educators can cultivate critical thinkers equipped to navigate the complexities of modern life.

Higher-order questioning in academics

Initially, posing many questions can be uncomfortable for students, but over time, they come to appreciate this method of learning, as it helps them deepen their knowledge and connect with the material being presented. When implementing higher-order questioning in the classroom, educators must use open-ended, provocative, and divergent questions to stimulate deeper understanding and engagement.

Teachers should lead students through the process of connecting one concept to another and arranging key elements and their connections into a hierarchy. Incorporate HOQ questions into lesson plans and Project-Based Learning initiatives to foster an environment where learners use prior knowledge and real-life experiences to develop insights and assumptions. Here are simple ways teachers can incorporate HOQs in daily lesson plans and delivery:

- Incorporate a conducive classroom environment — one where students are comfortable pondering, thinking, and guessing. Resolving the mystery, finding the missing connection or diving into the future are some ways to cultivate critical thinking every day.
- Incorporate "what if" questions into every lesson. Flip concepts on their heads, pose twisted questions or scenarios that push students to apply what they know to new situations, and ask them to map out outcomes, trade-offs, interconnections and consequences.
- Tie learning to life, people, and places. Connect conceptual learning with personal stories and local happenings. Questions like, "How does this connect to something you've seen or cared about?" make learning meaningful and personal. A specific strategy is to create a conceptual map or graphic organiser to outline the concept, its critical features, and its relationships with other elements.
- Bloom's Taxonomy model helps to remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate, create and shape learning goals across levels. Use higher-order prompts—compare, critique, design, and justify — to move students beyond recall toward deeper insight. Align activities and assessments with each level to nurture progression from foundational knowledge to creative, evidence-based output.
- Kick off projects with high energy. Start a project by asking something provocative questions like "How could we redesign this space to save energy? What will change if we change the adaptive features of this animal?" This will arouse students to test ideas and assess possibilities, making learning feel real and interesting.
- Encourage creative, wild answers — brainstorm with questions to generate many possible answers. Invite wild, unexpected ideas, and say, "What are all the possible paths/solutions we could take?" This encourages exploration beyond their imagination and creativity.
- Sprinkle reflective moments at key points. After an activity, ask kids to unpack their thinking: "What surprised you? What would you try differently next time?" Encourage evidence-based thinking and honest self-assessment.
- Allow pauses between questions. Allow time for "creative pauses" after posing questions to give students time to think and prevent them from raising their hands before they organise their thoughts.
- Build small inquiry teams with rotating roles. Create small learning circles (groups of 3-4 students) within the classroom. Assign roles like facilitator, questioner, and summarizer. The questioner leads with big, higher-order prompts, while peers build on ideas together.
- Close with synthesis and key takeaways. End the lesson with tasks that blend and connect to real life. Ask, "How do these pieces fit together, and what new understanding do you take away?" This helps students transfer learning with key takeaways.
- Search for and use meaningful apps and tools that you can use to cultivate critical thinking.

When you create an environment where students have time to ponder and reflect on questions, it encourages them to think more creatively and more critically. And that's the kind of learning atmosphere that brings students to the highest levels of learning, attainment and progress in academic environments.

(The author writes on education)

BELLETIN BOARD

Foundation For Excellence India Trust

The Foundation for Excellence Scholarship for Technical Courses 2025 supports financially disadvantaged Indian students enrolled in the first year of BE/B.Tech, 5-year Integrated M.Tech, MBBS, or 5-year law programmes with a family income or less than Rs 3 lakh. Eligible applicants must have ≥ 70% in Class 12 and merit-based admission. The award includes Rs 50,000 per year plus skilling and mentoring. Last date: January 31 Apply: https://t.ly/7VwGQ

Focus Area Science Technology Summer Fellowship

The Focus Area Science & Technology Summer Fellowship 2026, offered by the Indian Academy of Sciences, the Indian National Science Academy, and the National Academy of Sciences, offers research fellowships to meritorious students and teachers from designated Indian states. Eligible students must be in specific years of UG/PG STEM and related programmes with ≥65% marks; teachers in eligible regions can also apply. Last date to apply: January 31. Apply at: https://t.ly/SoUtT

E-Commerce marketing internship

Kala Associates is hiring e-commerce marketing interns who can work from home. Students with knowledge of conflict management, creative thinking, communication, and interpersonal skills can apply by February 20. The stipend is Rs 10,000-15,000 /month. Apply at: https://tinyurl.com/bdeywyhr.

Webtoon production artist internship

Integral Solution is hiring a webtoon production artist intern who can work from home. Students with knowledge of Canva and AI tools can apply by February 20. The stipend is Rs 10,000-12,000/month. Apply at: https://tinyurl.com/y9uymz6s.

Full-stack development internship

GenSpark India is hiring full-stack development interns in Bangalore (Hybrid). Students with knowledge of MERN, MongoDB, Node.js, and React can apply by February 20. The stipend is Rs 15,000-20,000 /month. Apply at: https://shorturl.at/00oCU.

Digital marketing (SEO) internship

Trade Brains is hiring digital marketing (SEO) interns in Bangalore. Students with knowledge of digital marketing, email marketing, Google AdWords, Google analytics and stock trading can apply by February 20. The stipend is Rs 15,000-20,000/month. Apply at: https://tinyurl.com/ba84ahe8.

Escaping from social media: Lessons for students and freshers

MAULLIKA SHARMA

Freshers entering the workforce often find themselves navigating a maze of expectations, responsibilities, and change. In this column, we've explored mindset shifts that help you thrive — building confidence, managing the inner critic, embracing change, and focusing on wellbeing. Today, let's talk about a silent stressor that hides in plain sight: social media.

Gen Z — digital natives — have grown up surrounded by technology. Devices, apps, screens, and AI are second nature. Social media, in particular, feels like oxygen. It's where friendships form, communities thrive, news spreads, and entertainment flows. It promises connection, belonging, and even productivity. On the surface, it seems like the perfect solution to stay informed and engaged.

But beneath the convenience lies a cost — a cost that often goes unnoticed until it begins to erode mental and emotional well-being.

The hidden stress behind scrolling

Clients often share thoughts like:

"There's nothing to talk about in person—we already know everything from social media."

"My peers are doing so much better than me!"

"I need a big fancy wedding, or people will think I'm a loser."

"I prefer to spend a quiet evening at home after work, but everyone seems to be hanging out at the bar. They may think I am a loser!"

These aren't just thoughts — they're fears: fear of missing out, fear of being judged, fear of not being 'enough.' Social media amplifies these fears, creating constant comparison and pressure to perform.

Research backs this up. Studies show that excessive social media use correlates with higher levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Why? Because scrolling through curated feeds often triggers a cycle of comparison. You see someone's promotion, vacation, or perfect selfie — and suddenly your own life feels inadequate. This phenomenon, known as social comparison theory, explains why we measure our worth against others, even when their reality is filtered and staged. As Harvard's John Torous notes, a one-week social media detox alone cut anxiety by 16%, depression by 24%, and insomnia by 14% — simple but powerful proof of its impact.

The ripple effect on well-being

The impact isn't just emotional. Social media can disrupt sleep patterns due to late-night scrolling and exposure to blue light. It can reduce concentration, fuel cyberbullying, spread misinformation, and even expose users to privacy risks. Over time, these factors chip away at mental resilience and physical health.

Imagine a world without social media. You meet friends for authentic conversations, laugh over shared experiences, and return home feeling refreshed—not pressured by others' choices of clothes, careers, or holiday destinations. Wouldn't that feel liberating? Wouldn't it allow you to focus on your own journey instead of comparing it to someone else's highlight reel?

Here's the truth: what you see online is rarely the whole story. Behind every perfect picture is a reality filled with struggles, insecurities, and imperfections—just like yours. Social media often projects an illusion of perfection rather than reality. Recognising this is the first step toward reclaiming your peace of mind.

Protect yourself: Practical strategies

So, how do you safeguard your well-being in a hyper-connected world? Here are some actionable steps:

- **Set time limits:** Use apps to monitor and restrict your social media usage.
- **Turn off notifications:** Reduce the temptation to check your phone constantly.
- **Prioritise real-life connections:** Meet people in person and create genuine memories.
- **Unplug regularly:** Schedule device-free periods. Humans recharge by disconnecting.
- **Strengthen privacy settings:** Protect your personal information and location data.
- **Curate your feed:** Unfollow accounts that trigger negativity; follow those that inspire.
- **Schedule offline activities:** Hiking, reading, or simply spending time outdoors.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Breathing exercises and meditation help anchor you in the present.
- **Avoid oversharing:** Think twice before posting sensitive details.
- **Discuss boundaries:** Talk to friends and family about what they share about you online.

These steps aren't about abandoning social media entirely—they're about using it mindfully, so it serves you rather than controls you.

Your worth is not measured by likes

Remember this: your value isn't defined by likes, comments, or followers. It's defined by your character, your actions, and the relationships you nurture in real life. Social media can be a tool—but only if you remain in control of it.

So, the next time you feel the urge to compare your life to someone else's curated feed, pause. Breathe. Remind yourself: their perfection is an illusion, and your reality is enough.

(The writer is a counsellor and wellness coach who works with adolescents and adults)

Write to us:
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TENNIS AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Sinner extends winning streak

Defending champion Keys falls to Pegula; Swiatek ends Aussie title hopes

MELBOURNE, REUTERS

One champion survived and another succumbed at the Australian Open on Monday as Jannik Sinner reached the quarter-finals after women's title holder Madison Keys crashed out at the hands of friend Jessica Pegula.

Sinner, who now has won 18 straight wins at the Australian Open, became the second Italian into the last eight after Lorenzo Musetti beat an injury-hampered Taylor Fritz, while Iga Swiatek sent the last Australian out of the women's draw with a 6-0, 6-3 thumping of qualifier Maddison Inglis.

Two days after suffering dramatic cramps in a third round scare against Eliot Spizzirri, Sinner rebounded with a 6-1, 6-3, 7-6(2) win over fellow Italian Luciano Darderi as the heat returned to Melbourne Park.

With the sun having retreated in the late afternoon, the double-defending champion was relieved to play in the shade at Margaret Court Arena on a day when temperatures reached 33 degrees Celsius.

Sinner will next meet American eighth seed Ben Shelton, who stepped in for the absent Novak Djokovic and overhauled 12th seed Casper Ruud 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 in the late match at Rod Laver Arena.

Shelton lost to Sinner in last year's semi-finals, one of a run of eight successive defeats to the Italian. A year after hoisting the women's trophy with a brilliant win over Aryna Sabalenka, Keys' title defence ended with a 6-3, 6-4 loss to sixth seed Pegula.

Good friends with Pegula, with whom she does a podcast, Keys promised to honour a pre-match wager by eating a cheese-smothered apple pie.

Pegula reached her fourth quarter-final at Melbourne Park and will meet Amanda Anisimova, who made it four US players in the women's final eight after beating China's Wang Xinyu 7-6(4), 6-4.

Second seed Swiatek will face former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina in the other quarter-final in the bottom half of the draw, the resurgent Kazakh having blitzed Elise Mertens 6-1, 6-3.

Musetti had revenge on his mind after losing to Fritz at the ATP Finals in November, and the fifth-seeded Italian delivered, winning 6-2, 7-5, 6-4 to reach his first Australian Open quarterfinals.

The Serbian great Novak Djokovic had a walkover when fourth round opponent Jakub Mensik withdrew with injury.

Fritz also bowed out sore and sorry, saying he had aggravated knee and abdominal issues during his previous win over Stan Wawrinka.

A day after Iva Jovic and Coco Gauff advanced, Anisimova became the fourth American through to the quarters.

Her opponent Wang had a medical time-out off-court after being broken twice in the second set and returned with strapping on her thigh, but she was unable to stick with the Wimbledon and U.S. Open runner-up.

While Monday's heat was stifling, day 10 of the Grand Slam on Tuesday will be on another level, with a forecast of 45 degrees Celsius (113F), raising the prospect of match disruptions and closed roofs at the main stadiums.

Bhambri exits

India's challenge at the Australian Open came to an end on Sunday after Yuki Bhambri and his Swedish partner Andre Goransson bowed out in the third round of the men's doubles, reports PTI from Melbourne.

Bhambri and Goransson went down 6-7(7), 3-6 to Brazil's unseeded pairing of Orlando Luz and Rafael Matos in a closely contested match that lasted just over an hour.

The Indo-Swedish combination fought hard in the opening set but failed to capitalise in the tie-break, and the Brazilians maintained their composure to seal the second set without much trouble. With Bhambri's exit, India's campaign at the season's first Grand Slam has concluded.

Bhambri had already made an earlier exit from the mixed doubles, while N Sriram Balaji had bowed out previously from the men's doubles.

Maaya Rajeshwaran and Arnav Paparkar exited the junior Australian Open on Saturday with first-round exits.

Results: Singles: 4th round:
Men: 5-Lorenzo Musetti (Ita) bt 9-Taylor Fritz (USA) 6-2, 7-5, 6-4; 2-Jannik Sinner (Ita) bt 22-Luciano Darderi (Ita) 6-1, 6-3, 7-6 (2); 8-Ben Shelton (USA) bt 12-Casper Ruud (Nor) 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4.
Women: 6-Jessica Pegula (USA) bt 9-Madison Keys (USA) 6-3, 6-4; 4-Amanda Anisimova (USA) bt Wang Xinyu (CHN) 7-6 (4), 6-4; 5-Elena Rybakina (Kaz) bt 21-Elise Mertens (Bel) 6-1, 6-3; 2-Iga Swiatek (Pol) bt Maddison Inglis (Aus) 6-0, 6-3.

Italy's Jannik Sinner returns to his compatriot Luciano Darderi during his straight-set victory in the fourth round of the Australian Open in Melbourne on Monday. AFP

RCB stumble to a second consecutive defeat

WPL's first ever century by Sciver-Brunt floors Challengers

VADODARA, PTI

Nat Sciver-Brunt (100 not out) hit the first-ever century of Women's Premier League history in its fourth edition as dominant Mumbai Indians beat Royal Challengers Bengaluru by 15 runs, despite Richa Ghosh's whirlwind 90, here on Monday.

In a must-win game to remain in contention for playoffs, defending champions Mumbai hit their strides to produce a near-perfect performance with the bat, piling up 199 for four.

But, despite making early inroads to leave RCB reeling at 35 for 5 inside the powerplay, MI bowlers appeared clueless against Richa who hammered 10 fours and six sixes to make 90 off 50 balls in her team's 184 for 9.

RCB collected 43 runs in the last two overs, with India all-rounder Amanjot Kaur being smacked for three sixes in a row by Richa.

Hayley Matthews (56 and 3/10), who had earlier struck a vital half-century, jolted MI twice as she accounted for skipper Smriti Mandhana (6) and Georgia Voll (9) in the fourth over, and for Radha Yadav (0) in her next.

Shabnim Ismail (2/25), who had struck first to remove Grace Harris (15), cleaned up Gautami Naik (1) for her second wicket while also took a sharp catch in the deep to help Matthews dismiss Radha.

With the win, Mumbai jumped to second spot with six points from seven matches. Delhi Capitals and Gujarat Giants are also on six points from six matches each but Mumbai have better Net Run Rate.

Earlier, England's Sciver-Brunt (100 not out) struck the first-ever century in WPL to fire Mumbai Indians to a formidable 199for 4.

Sciver-Brunt's 57-ball unbeaten ton and Matthews' 56 laid the foundation for a big total for Mumbai Indians.

Matthews and Sciver-Brunt put on 131 runs off 73 balls for the second wicket in a whirlwind partnership in which they not only rotated strike well but unleashed a flurry of boundaries. Matthews struck nine fours to make 56 off 39 balls while Sciver-Brunt hammered 16 fours and one six for her 100 not out.

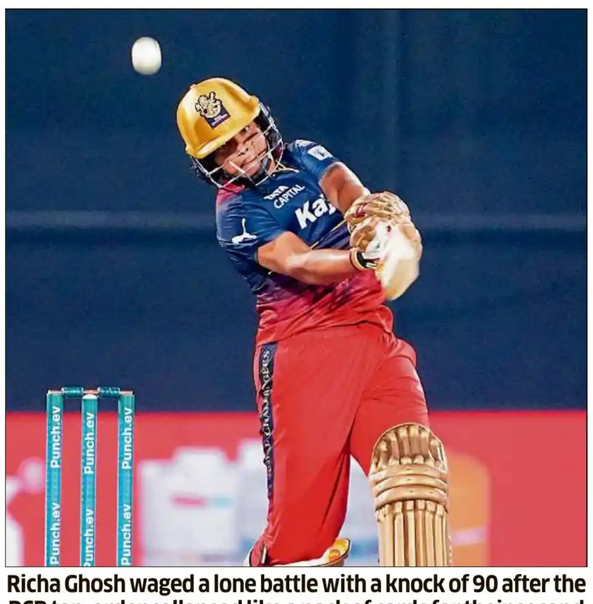
The pair came together early in the third over when Lauren Bell (2/21) trapped Sajeevan Sajana (7) in front of the wickets.

RCB's defeat leaves them under pressure with little margin for error in the remaining fixtures, as back-to-back losses dent their play-off hopes. While Richa's lone resistance kept the contest alive till the end, the lack of support from the top order proved costly. Mumbai, meanwhile, will take confidence from their all-round display.

Brief scores: Mumbai Indians: 199/4 in 20 overs (Hayley Matthews 56, Nat Sciver-Brunt 100 n.o.; Lauren Bell 2-21) bt Royal Challengers Bengaluru: 184/9 in 20 overs (Richa Ghosh 90, Nadine de Klerk 28; Shabnim Ismail 2-25, Hayley Matthews 3-10, Amelia Kerr 2-37). **Result:** MI won by 15 runs. **PoM:** Nat Sciver-Brunt. **RCB's next match:** vs UP Warriorz (Jan 29).

Women's Premier League Points Table

Teams	P	W	L	NRR	Pts
RCB (Q)	7	**5**	**2**	+0.947	**10**
MI	7	**3**	**4**	+0.146	**6**
DC	6	**3**	**3**	-0.169	**6**
GG	6	**3**	**3**	-0.341	**6**
UPW	6	**2**	**4**	-0.769	**4**



Richa Ghosh waged a lone battle with a knock of 90 after the RCB top-order collapsed like a pack of cards for their second consecutive defeat in WPL on Monday. PTI FILE PHOTO

Qatar's Sheikh Joaan elected to lead Asia's OCA

TASHKENT (UZBEKISTAN), AP: Qatar scored a win in Olympic politics on Monday, with the emirate also aiming to host the 2036 Summer Games.

Olympic Council of Asia members elected Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani as their president to complete the term in office of Randir Singh of India, who stepped down for health reasons.

Sheikh Joaan was the only candidate nominated and received 44 votes, with one OCA member abstaining, at the Olympic body's annual assembly. His term runs to 2028.

"I stand before you today with feelings of great pride and responsibility," the sheikh said in an acceptance speech. He also leads the Qatar Olympic Committee and is senior vice president of the global group of national Olympic bodies, known as ANOC.

Bradman's Baggy Green sold for USD 460K

GOLD COAST, PTI: A Baggy Green cap worn by Australia batting legend Don Bradman during a home Test series against India in 1947-48 and gifted to opponent player Sriranga Wasudev Sohoni was on Monday sold for a whopping USD 460,000 (Rs 4.22 lac approx.) at an auction here.

Sohoni's family preserved the cap for the last 75 years, never exhibited publicly, before it was sold on Monday by Lloyds Auctions. The baggy green is adorned with the Australian cricket coat of arms, with "1947-48" embroidered underneath.

The 1947-48 contest against India was Bradman's final home Test series before retiring in 1948 with a career batting average of 99.94, earning him the reputation as cricket's greatest batter.

Cunha caps United upset at Arsenal

MANCHESTER, AFP

Manchester United dealt a blow to Arsenal's Premier League title charge as Matheus Cunha's superb strike clinched a thrilling 3-2 win over the leaders on Sunday.

Lisandro Martinez's own goal put Arsenal ahead at the Emirates Stadium, but Bryan Mbeumo equalised before halftime.

Patrick Dorgu's brilliant blast gave United the lead after the interval, until Mikel Merino's late leveller looked to have rescued a point for Arsenal.

In a dramatic finish, Brazilian forward Cunha bagged the winner with an eye-catching drive three minutes from fulltime.

It was Arsenal's first defeat in 13 games in all competitions since losing at Aston Villa in December.

The Gunners lost at home for the first time in 18 matches in all competitions since losing to Bournemouth in May.

Arsenal are now just four points above second-placed Manchester City and third-placed Aston Villa, who both closed the gap with wins against Wolves and Newcastle respectively this weekend.

City boss Pep Guardiola this week called Arsenal the "best team in the world", but Arsenal's three-game winless run in the league has breathed new life into the title race.

Arsenal still control their destiny but goalless draws against Liverpool and Nottingham Forest had sparked concerns from their anxious fan-base and this was another alarming result for boss Mikel Arteta.

Arteta has not lifted a trophy since the 2020 FA Cup and Arsenal, who have not won the title in 22 years, face a test of their nerve in the coming weeks after blowing significant leads at the top in previous title races.

United's first win at the Emirates Stadium since December 2017 continued Michael Carrick's impressive start to his interim reign.

Former Middlesbrough boss Carrick, hired to temporarily replace the sacked Ruben Amorim, started his tenure with a surprise 2-0 win against Manchester City last weekend.

He has already masterminded victories over the top two to lift United into fourth after Amorim's turbulent spell in charge.

Arsenal's relentless early pressure was rewarded in the 29th minute.

It was a shambolic goal for United to concede, starting with Dorgu's failure to head clear from Piero Hincapie's cross.

Bukayo Saka pounced and clipped his cross towards Martin Odegaard and although the Arsenal captain miscued his shot, Martinez made a hash of clearing under pressure from Jurrien Timber and the ball bounced in off the United defender's heel.

Arsenal had not allowed a shot on target in their previous two league games.

Yet if Arsenal's opener had come gifted-wrapped by United, the Gunners returned the favour with an even more careless blunder in the 37th minute.

Zubimendi's woefully under-hit back pass was seized on by Mbeumo, who glided around Arsenal keeper David Raya to fire home.

Mbeumo's ninth goal in all competitions since arriving from Brentford maintained the Cameroon forward's gradual improvement in his first season with United.

Result: Arsenal: 2 (Martinez 29th own goal, Merino 84th) bt Manchester United: 3 (Mbeumo 37th, Dorgu 50th, Cuhna 87th).

Matheus Cunha (right) celebrates after scoring Manchester United's winnger against Arsenal on Sunday night. AP

Gukesh bounces back with a win over Fedoseev in 8th round

WIJK AAN ZEE (THE NETHERLANDS), PTI: World Champion D Gukesh (**in pic**) bounced back after two back-to-back losses and put it across Vladimir Fedoseev of Slovenia in the eighth round of the Tata Steel Masters here Monday.

Gukesh won handsomely with black pieces which should do a world of good to his confidence.

The Indian ace had been playing well till the first rest day and then lost two games in a row and finally pulled one back. It was a picturesque finish when Gukesh put his rook emprise and finished the game in 41 moves.

On a day when Arjun Erigaisi survived a difficult position against compatriot Aravindh Chithambaram and settled for a draw, R Praggnanandhaa escaped in a pawn down endgame to hold youngster Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus of Turkey.

Meanwhile, local favourite Anish Giri threw the tournament open with a fine victory against overnight leader Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan.

Abdusattarov remained in sole lead on 5.5 points despite the loss as his nearest rival and compatriot Javokhir Sindarov was held to a draw by Vincent Keymer of Germany.

With just five rounds to come now, Abdusattorov on 5.5 is still at the top pursued closely by Sindarov a half point behind.

The day produced just two decisive games out of a possible seven in the 14-player field and which meant that 14-year old Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus of Turkey remained in the joint third spot with Hans Moke Niemann of United States and Jorden van Foreest of Netherlands.

Close behind now and hoping for a few victories is Gukesh on four points with Giri, Fedoseev, Keymer and Matthias Bluebaum of Germany all having still chances to topple the players ahead of them.

Erigaisi is next in contention on 3.5 points after drawing Chithambaram while Praggnanandhaa still needs to win his first game.

Results: Round 8: Hans Moke Niemann (USA, 4) drew with Jorden van Foreest (NED, 4); Aravindh Chithambaram (Ind, 2.5) drew with Arjun Erigaisi (Ind, 3.5); Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 4) lt to D Gukesh (Ind, 4); Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus (Tur, 4.5) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 3); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 4) drew with Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 5); Thai Dai Van Nguyen (Cze, 3) drew with Matthias BLuebaum (Ger, 4).

Capitals aim for Giants' kill

VADODARA, PTI: Delhi Capitals will ride the momentum of their big win over table-toppers Royal Challengers Bengaluru and bank on their strong bowling lineup to deliver when they face Gujarat Giants on Tuesday, with the business end of the Women's Premier League fast approaching.

Delhi Capitals, the most consistent side in the WPL after reaching all three finals but finishing runners-up each time, made a telling statement in their last outing by handing Smriti Mandhana-led Royal Challengers Bengaluru their first defeat of the season.

The comprehensive seven-wicket win not only kept them in contention for the play-offs but also lifted them to second spot on the WPL points table.

DC, led by star Indian batter Jemimah Rodrigues, didn't have the best start to the season, but their consistency has emerged as the campaign has progressed. South African batting stalwarts Laura Wolvaardt and Lizelle Lee have provided solidity at the top, although ace opener Shafali Verma's patchy form has persisted.

Shafali has managed just one half-century at the top and Jemimah will want the top order to fire in unison to avoid losing focus as the tournament enters a crucial phase. She, too, will be hoping to shake off the poor form that has lingered this season, having scored only one half-century -- against Mumbai Indians -- even as she continues to demonstrate her leadership skills in her first season as DC's captain.

Jemimah Rodrigues

Vedanta Kalinga Lancers celebrate with the trophy after winning the Hockey India League by defeating Ranchi Royals 3-2 in the final in Bhubaneswar on Monday.

Lancers beat Royals to clinch title

BHUBANESWAR, PTI

Vedanta Kalinga Lancers were crowned Hockey India League (HIL) champions after they defeated Ranchi Royals 3-2 in a thrilling summit clash in front of home fans at the Kalinga Stadium, here on Monday.

Alexander Hendrickx (4th, 27th) struck a brace while Dilpreet Singh (25th) scored the other goal for the Lancers.

Araijeet Singh Hundal (9th) and captain Tom Boon (59th) were the goal-scorers for Ranchi Royals.

HIL handed a prize money of Rs 3 crore to champions Vedanta Kalinga Lancers, Rs 2 crore for the runner-up Ranchi Royals and Rs 1 crore to the third-place team Hyderabad Toofans, who defeated HIL GC 4-3 earlier in the day.

HIL GC were awarded the Fairplay Award.

Tamil Nadu Dragons goalkeeper Prince Deep Singh won the Best Goalkeeper of the Tournament and Talem Priyobarta of HIL GC earned the Upcoming Player of the Tournament award, with both players receiving Rs 10 lakh each.

Ranchi Royals' captain Tom Boon won the Top Scorer of the Tournament with 19 goals to his name and was awarded Rs 10 lakh, while Hyderabad Toofans' Amandeep Lakra was crowned the Player of the Tournament and was presented Rs 20 lakh.

In the final, both teams started the first quarter strongly by creating an array of circle entries and chances, determined to score early goals.

Kalinga Lancers were awarded back-to-back penalty corners in the fourth minute and Hendrickx converted with a powerful drag-flick past the Ranchi Royals goalkeeper.

However, the lead lasted only for a few minutes as the Royals equalised with an impressive field goal.

In the ninth minute, Yashdeep Siwach lobbed the ball from the left wing to switch flanks and found Araijeet, who delivered a powerful finish to equalise. The second quarter saw Kalinga Lancers turn the game on its head with two goals.

While Ranchi Royals showed great attacking intent, the Lancers won a series of back-to-back penalty corners to ensure their opponents were confined to their own half.

In the 25th minute, Kalinga Lancers won a penalty corner and although Hendrickx's dragflick was initially saved by Royals goalkeeper Suraj Karkera, Dilpreet pounced on the rebound and slotted the ball into the goal to take the lead.

Two minutes later, Lancers were awarded yet another PC and this time Hendrickx unleashed a powerful drag-flick into the top right corner to increase their advantage at half time.

'Worked on my length control after last IPL'

GUWAHATI, PTI: Ravi Bishnoi believes a year of hard work, self-introspection and fine-tuning his lengths has helped him grab an unexpected opportunity and revive his T20 World Cup hopes after being out of the Indian reckoning. He went on to reflecting on the last year and what he worked upon after poor returns in the IPL where he managed just nine wickets from 11 matches at an average of over 44.

The poor returns hurt the Sanjiv Goenka-owned side as they missed the playoffs, finishing seventh in the standings. He was subsequently released by the franchise but found a fresh start when Rajasthan Royals snapped him up for Rs 7.20 crore at this year's auction.

"The work I have done in the last one year was on my lengths because I didn't do so well in the IPL last season. I didn't have much control over my lengths and my lines in the last season. That's why it was tough for me," he admitted.

"But I tried my best to bowl in the 5-6 metres length on the stumps as it is difficult to hit from those lengths."

Neeraj, Krishaa emerge champs

BENGALURU, DHNS: Neeraj Shetty and Krishaa Nichani won the men's and women's events, respectively, in the open categories at the Republic Day Cup at the Bangalore Golf Club on Monday.

Results: Men: Open event: Gross winner: Neeraj Shetty (38 pts); Runner-up: Sundar Adige (36).
Handicap 0-9: Nett winner: Srirag Jayraman (37); Runner-up: Abhinav Baskar (36).
Handicap 10-18: Nett winner: Ravikumar Raju (42); Runner-up: Vaibhav Gupta
Handicap 19-24: Nett winner: Rudraprasad R (43); Runner-up: Deepak Ramesh (40)
Seniors: 65+: Gross winner: Ranganath V (29); Nett winner: Satish Kumar Mittal (41).
75+: Gross winner: Ajit Rana (27); Nett winner: BK Subbhash Chandra (36).
Women: Open event: Gross winner: Krishaa Nichani (31).
Handicap 0-16: Nett winner: Latha Shivanna (41).
Handicap 17-24: Nett winner: Anupa Rongala (42).

IN BRIEF

K'taka hammer Andaman 19-0

▸ Subhathra A netted seven goals while Anvijoshi, Tvisha Amaresh Kulkarnai, Richa Bhatia and IRA Singh Kapany scored a brace each as Karnataka thrashed Andaman 19-0 in the under-13 Asmitha Zonal Football League at the Bangalore Football Stadium, reports DHNS.

Results: Karnataka: 19: Subhathra A (2nd, 5th, 6th, 20th, 25th, 28th, 46th, Rukshana 9th, Anvijoshi 13th, 44th, Tvisha Amaresh Kulkarnai 16th, 23rd, Gouri Ningana gouda Patil 17th, Anya Saxena 18th, Richa Bhatia 19th, 49th, Pranitha VR 21st, IRA Singh Kapany 36th, 47th) bt Andaman: 0; Kerala: 8: Diya U 3rd, 20th, 27th, 39th, 47th, Shazana EA 22nd, Aadiya Dinesh 25th, 49th) bt Pondicherry: 1 (Sebiya S 5th).

Indian paddlers shine in Doha

▸ Indian paddlers enjoyed a rich haul of 10 medals, including four gold, at the 2026 WTT Star Youth Contender and Feeder events in Doha, highlighted by Ahona Ray's top-podium finish in the fiercely contested Under-15 girls' category, reports PTI from New Delhi.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

WPL: Gujarat Giants vs Delhi Capitals **(7:30 pm). LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

3rd ODI: Sri Lanka vs England **(2:30 pm). LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network, FanCode.**

U-19 WC: Zimbabwe vs India, New Zealand vs Pakistan **(1 pm). LIVE** on **Star Sports Select 2, JioHotstar.**

TENNIS

Australian Open: Quarterfinals: **(8:00 am). LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network, SonyLIV.**

Sanju Samson's poor returns in the ongoing T20I series against New Zealand have raised a few concerns in the Indian camp, ahead of the T20 World Cup. PTI

CRICKET

Time RUNNING OUT for SAMSON

With three failures in his favoured spot, the right-hander has no excuses

MADHU JAWALI
BENGALURU, DHNS

When Matt Henry's harmless delivery rattled the stumps behind him for a golden duck, Sanju Samson would have wondered if he had blown up his last chance of keeping his place in the playing XI, having managed just 10 and 6 in his previous two innings.

While the rest of the Indian batting, inspired by skipper Suryakumar Yadav's return to form, is radiating intimidation, Samson appears as a square peg in a round hole. In near-perfect batting conditions in the ongoing T20I series against New Zealand, the right-hander hasn't looked the part, picking up three successive failures, raising a major concern less than two weeks from the home T20 World Cup.

Samson, after much clamour, was included in the T20 World Cup squad, ahead of Test and ODI skipper Shubman Gill, a decision which, at the time it was made, was as bold as it was logical. Samson had been treated unfairly despite stacking up three centuries towards the end of 2024 as Gill was brought back into the T20I set-up. The direct consequence of this move was the displacement of Samson from his favoured No. 1 position, where Gill linked up with his Punjab team-mate Abhishek Sharma, who has remained unshakeable at the top.

The separation of Samson and Abhishek, who had forged a successful partnership, had an impact on the Kerala batter's performances last year. Batting in different positions without a meaningful set of matches unsettled him, and his returns were poor. In 11 innings, he opened in six, came in at No. 3 twice and was sent at No. 5 thrice. In all, he managed 222 runs at an average of 20.18 and a poor strike rate of 126.85 with a lone fifty (56) against Oman in the Asia Cup.

When selectors sat down to pick the squad for the New Zealand series and the T20 World Cup last month, few expected them to exclude Gill and reinstall Samson as the No. 1 choice to open with Abhishek. But the Ajit Agarkar-led panel, in a welcome move, broke away from the convention of not touching the big stars.

Three matches into the T20I series against the Kiwis, the selectors and the Indian team management have a Samson issue at hand. Unlike in the past, when he would go to bed wondering where he would be batting the next day, Samson had been assured of batting position. With that much clarity, he was expected to at least look the part, if not produce big runs. But Sunday's dismissal suggested he is weighed down by expectations after all the support he received ahead of team selection.

Coming into the side at the expense of one of India's potential future greats would certainly carry its own pressure. His huge fan base back in his home state, which often overlooks reality and launches a social media war at the perceived slight to the batter, doesn't help his cause either. With each failure, the pressure mounts, especially with Shreyas Iyer warming the bench and second wicketkeeper Ishan Kishan blazing away at the moment.

Someone like KL Rahul, too, has been shunted up and down the order, but in a post-match chat during the ODI series against New Zealand, the right-hander said he was ready to bat anywhere in the side just to be in the playing 11! Samson, therefore, has no excuse to offer after three failures in his preferred batting position.

With the series wrapped up, India might persist with Samson at the top in the remaining two matches, and that's all the 31-year-old batter has to secure his place in the 11. If he fails, Kishan would displace him with Tilak Varma set to return for the biennial event.

Sanju Samson in 2025

Spot	Innings	Runs	HS	Ave	SR	100s	50s
1st	9	104	37	11.55	133.33	0	0
3rd	2	58	56	29.00	118.36	0	1
5th	3	76	39	25.33	124.59	0	0
Sanju Samson in 2026							
1st	3	16	10	5.33	123.07	0	0

Tilak to rejoin India squad in Mumbai

NEW DELHI, PTI: India's dependable No. 3 Tilak Varma is yet to regain full match fitness and has been left out of the squad for the final two T20Is against New Zealand at Visakhapatnam and Thiruvananthapuram.

Tilak, who is recovering from an abdominal surgery, is at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru. He was expected to join the squad for the last two games but his replacement, Shreyas Iyer, has been asked to stay on with the squad.

Tilak Varma

"India batter Tilak Varma has resumed physical training and is making steady progress with his rehabilitation at the BCCI Centre of Excellence.

"Tilak will link up with the squad in Mumbai once he has regained full match fitness on February 3, ahead of India's warm-up match for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. " the BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia was quoted as saying in a media release.

BFC likely to play SC Delhi in their ISL opener

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru FC are likely to face debutant SC Delhi in their opening Indian Super League match at their home ground Sree Kanteerava Stadium here for a 7:30 pm kick-off on February 15.

The match takes place on the second day of the much-delayed season as Mohun Bagan are in line to play Kerala Blasters in the first match for a 5 pm kick-off at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata while FC Goa will host another debutant Inter Kashi in a 7 pm kick-off in Fatorda.

These are as per a tentative fixture shared by the AIFF presented to interested bidders for commercial and broadcast rights and are subject to change by participating clubs.

As per it, last year's runners-up BFC will host champions Mohun Bagan on March 14 while southern rivals Kerala Blasters will visit on April 11. Both matches are slated for a 7:30 pm kick.

Among the remaining two matches that Bengaluru will play at home, the club will face Mohammedan SC (March 7, 7:30 pm) and 2024 champions Mumbai City (April 25, 5 pm). The remaining rivals, including East Bengal and Chennaiyin FC, will be played away.

Meanwhile, the Kolkata Derby between Bagan and EBFC is slated for May 3.

Padikkal replaces Agarwal as captain

VIGNESH BHARADWAJ
BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka's defeat to Madhya Pradesh in the Elite Group B Ranji Trophy match was perhaps the last straw that forced Karnataka senior selectors to relieve Mayank Agarwal of his captaincy duties.

Though Karnataka won just two of their seven games in the Mushtaq Ali Trophy and fell at the semifinal hurdle in the Vijay Hazare Trophy under Agarwal, they were favourites to enter the knockouts from their group, having finished the first phase of the tournament on top of the table, the loss in the penultimate match has pushed them to the brink.

With his batting, too, staying inconsistent, Devdutt Padikkal was appointed Karnataka's new captain for their must-win final Group B fixture against Punjab, starting January 29 in Mohali.

The selection committee, headed by former Karnataka cricketer Amit Verma, announced its decision on Monday afternoon.

Agarwal, however, has been named in the squad and will continue to open the batting.

Devdutt Padikkal

"We feel that Mayank (Agarwal) gets very involved in terms of the team, and we feel that the captaincy responsibility is taking a toll on his batting," chief selector Amit Verma told *DH*.

When asked if the decision was conveyed to Agarwal, Verma said the panel had a word with him.

"He is in a good place and is playing reasonably well. We expect a lot from him since he is a big-match player and gets big runs, which is not happening now. It was about trying to relieve the captaincy pressure as he is very crucial for us at the top of the order."

About Padikkal's promotion, Verma said, "We wanted to put a little more responsibility on Devdutt (Padikkal). It will be good for him to grow. If you try to put that extra pressure and responsibility on him, it might help him to develop as a captain. And it could eventually help him when in the Indian whites as well."

After being cleared of a shoulder injury, Smaran R has been included in the squad, while the return of India internationals, KL Rahul and Prasidh Krishna, would boost the side in a crucial game, especially with the in-form Karun Nair ruled out due to an injury.

Abhinav Manohar, who failed to make an impact, has been dropped, while off-spinner Mohsin Khan and Dhruv Prabhakar return to the squad. M Venkatesh also finds a place after being deemed fit.

While Shrijith KL has been cleared of any injury, Kruthik Krishna, who kept wickets for most part of the Madhya Pradesh game, could be in line for a debut.

Squad: Mayank Agarwal, KL Rahul, Aneesh KV, Devdutt Padikkal (c), Smaran R, Shreyas Gopal, Kruthik Krishna (wk), Venkatesh M, Vidyadhar Patil, Vidwath Kaverappa, Prasidh M Krishna, Mohsin Khan, Shikhar Shetty, Shrijith KL (wk), Dhruv Prabhakar. **Coach:** Yere Goud; **Bowling Coach:** Mansur Ali Khan, **Fielding Coach:** Shabharish P Mohan, **Manager:** PV Sumanth, **S&C:** Irfanulla Khan, **Physiotherapist:** Abhishek Kulkarni, **Performance Analyst:** Giri Prasad, **Masseur:** Somasundar CM, **Side-arm Specialist:** Ashok V.

Elite Group B

Team	Mat	Won	Lost	Drawn	Points	Quotient
Maharashtra	6	3	0	3	24	1.487
Madhya Pradesh	6	2	0	4	22	1.282
Karnataka	**6**	**2**	**1**	**3**	**21**	**1.422**
Saurashtra	6	2	0	4	19	1.387
Goa	6	1	3	2	11	0.920
Punjab	6	1	2	3	11	0.705
Chandigarh	6	1	4	1	8	0.624
Kerala	6	0	2	4	8	0.677

Pakistan delay decision on T20 World Cup participation

LAHORE, PTI: Pakistan on Monday kept the suspense alive over their participation in the upcoming men's T20 World Cup, deferring a final decision until at least Friday and contemplating a boycott of their marquee clash against co-hosts India in solidarity with Bangladesh, who were ousted from the tournament.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said a final call on participation will be taken either on Friday or next Monday after chairman Mohsin Naqvi met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here.

Naqvi later took to social media to confirm that the issue was discussed at length during his meeting with the Shehbaz in Islamabad.

"I had a productive meeting with the Prime Minister and briefed him on the ICC matter. He directed that we resolve it while keeping all options on the table," Naqvi tweeted. "It was agreed that the final decision will be taken either on Friday or next Monday."

According to sources, Shehbaz told Naqvi that they should extend all possible support to Bangladesh, who were recently ousted from the tournament. The sources said Shehbaz was briefed on multiple scenarios, including the possibility of Pakistan not sending its team for the T20 World Cup, or participating in the event but boycotting the high-profile match against India scheduled for February 15 in Colombo, if that course of action helped Bangladesh cricket in any manner.

The PCB had earlier maintained that the govt would take the final call on Pakistan's participation.

Aanya sets up summit clash with Afeefa in Jr girls' billiards

BENGALURU, DHNS: Gujarat's Aanya Patel edged Shruthi L of Tamil Nadu to enter the final of the Junior girls' billiards competition at the National Championships in Bahadurgarh, Haryana, on Monday.

The 19-year-old came out 167-157 winner, which helped her set up a meeting with promising Afeefa Thabassam of Tamil Nadu in the title round.

Afeefa, the Sub-junior champion, stunned last year's finalist, Sanvi Shah, 115-62 in the one-hour contest later in the day.

In a match of fluctuating fortunes, Aanya played the big points well to keep the Tamil Nadu cueist at bay in the one-hour semifinal. Shruthi did get a few chances to turn things around, but she failed to make good her chances.

The other semifinal may have bordered on mediocrity, but Afeefa took the chances that came her way to put it past her formidable rival, who had a poor day in the office. The Chennai cueist, who had earlier beaten Leisha Reddy in the quarters, will look to complete a billiards double.

Results: Junior girls semifinals: Aanya Patel (Guj) bt Shruthi L (TN) 167-157; Afeefa Thabassam (TN) bt Sanvi Shah (MP) 115-62.
Quarters: Aanya bt Jiya Sehgal (Pun) 127-53; Shruthi bt Mokshita Balasaria (Tel) 232-70; Afeefa bt Leisha Reddy (Tel) 113-72; Sanvi bt Angel Kamboj (Har) 101-77.

Gujarat's Aanya Patel beat Tamil Nadu's Shruthi L to enter the Junior Girls' billiards final at the National Championships.

Raghav denies K'taka victory

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka's hopes of completing an innings victory in their Col CK Nayudu Elite Group D fixture against Chandigarh were dashed by the No.3 centurion Raghav Verma as the hosts settled for a draw after bagging the first innings honours in Alur (3) here.

Karnataka went into the day looking for seven wickets, but the hosts were stonewalled from Chandigarh's fourth-wicket pair of Raghav (120 n.o.) and Aarush Bhandari (37), who batted for 45 overs while stitching an 84-run partnership.

Following the fall of Aarush, Raghav stayed firm and batted 29.2 overs with Nikhil (21, 82b, 4x4) and another 20 overs with Sahil Kumar (8 n.o., 67b) to complete the rescue act.

For the home team, Mohsin Khan returned 4-73 figure while Manvanth L Kumar (2/39) picked up two wickets.

Brief scores: Karnataka: 634/4 decl in 138.2 overs vs Chandigarh: 283 all out & (F/o): (O/n: 55/3): 250/6 in 116 overs (Raghav Verma 120 n.o., Aarush Bhandari 37 n.o.; Mohsin Khan 4-73, Manvanth L Kumar 2-39). **Karnataka's next match:** Uttarakhand (Feb 6).

Bihar win Ranji Plate title

PATNA. PTI

Bihar capitalised on opener Piyush Singh's magnificent second-innings double century and incisive bowling spells from Suraj Kashyap and Himanshu Singh to hammer Manipur by a massive 568 runs in the Plate final, sealing a triumphant return to the Ranji Trophy Elite Group on Monday.

Bihar, whose Ranji Trophy journey has been marked by turbulence, had briefly broken into the Elite Group in the 2022-23 season before slipping back to the Plate Group in 2024-25.

Now restored to the top tier, they are pressing ahead with a rebuilding phase under skipper Sakibul Gani, anchored by the promise of teenage batting prodigy Vaibhav Suryavanshi.

On Monday, Bihar set Manipur an improbable target of 764 after Raghuvendra Pratap Singh fell agonisingly short of a century, dismissed for his overnight score of 90, prompting the declaration of the second innings at 505 for 6.

Bihar, who had scored 522 in the first innings and then dismissed Manipur for 264, got rid of their opponents for 195 in the second essay, with spinners Suraj Kumar Kashyap (3/32) and Himanshu Singh (3/49) taking three wickets each on the fifth and final day.

The architects of the emphatic victory were skipper Gani (108) and Bipin Saurabh (143), who struck fine centuries in the first innings, and Piyush Singh, who followed it up with an unbeaten 216 off 322 balls in the second innings as Bihar piled on the runs against a hapless Manipur.

Bihar declared after just nine balls on the final day, with Raghuvendra unable to add to the team's overnight total of 505, prompting Gani to call an early declaration and give his side a full day to dismantle Manipur.

Bihar's bowlers left Manipur in deep trouble at 50 for 5 inside 14 overs, a collapse that worsened to 70 for 7 by the 23rd, before a rearguard 102-ball 74 from teenager Pheiroijam Jotin briefly frustrated the attack and delayed the inevitable.

Brief scores: 522 & 505/6 decl (Mangal Mahrour 31, Piyush Singh 216 n.o., Khalid Alam 81, Bipin Saurabh 52, Raghuvendra Pratap Singh 90; Pheiroijam Jotin 3-85) bt Manipur: 264 & 195 all out in 56.1 overs (Pheiroijam Jotin 74; Prashant Singh 2-51, S Kashyap 3-32, H Singh 3-49).

Bihar's Piyush Kumar celebrates his double century during the fourth day of the Ranji Trophy Plate final match against Manipur at Moin-ul-Haq Stadium in Patna on Sunday. PTI

Rajesh brace fires RWF to comfortable win

BENGALURU, DHNS: Rajesh S scored a brace in an RWF FC's lopsided 4-1 victory over AGORC FC in the latest rounds of the BDFA A-Division League Championship at BFS here on Monday.

LOCAL FOOTBALL

Rajesh's goal from the spot gave RWC the lead in the 27th minute before Daniel R doubled it three minutes later. Jayavandan Sigamani then scored in the 45th minute to put the match beyond doubt.

Arun Pandey scored a late penalty in the injury time for AGORC to pull one back, but Rajesh confirmed their drubbing with his second goal seven minutes into the second half.

Results: RWF FC: 4 (Rajesh S 27th P, 52nd, Daniel R 30th, Jayavandan Sigamani 45th) bt AGORC FC: 1 (Arun Pandey 45+4th P); Bangalore Eagles FC: 1 (Shivakumar 35th) bt Blitz FC: 0; Roots FS: 2 (Karthi S 60th, Thangkaihao Haokip 67th) bt Income Tax FC 1 (Darin Marcel Christopher 30th).

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